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Favorite shirts ... p.12

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Portrait of a woman ... p.17

Murder of Dutch filmmaker sparks identity crisis in Europe

Harry der Nederlanden

The murder of Theo van Gogh in the Netherlands by a militant Muslim has sparked reaction out of all proportion to the event, not just in the Netherlands but in other European countries as well. It brought home to the Dutch and to other countries with large Muslim populations the enormity of the problems they are facing in these unassimilated communities in their midst. The reaction comes not just from a prejudiced minority – some of whom struck out by vandalizing mosques – but also from leaders on the left who have always touted tolerance and a wide open society.

Commentators have noted a sudden and surprising shift in attitude in a country that has for decades bent over backwards to accommodate immigrant populations from countries like Turkey and Morocco. Van Gogh's sensational murder, it seems, has driven home the realization, a realization that has been growing for a long time, that Europe has opened their doors to those who would gladly destroy their hosts. "We have enemies living among us!" declared one sign left at the site of Van Gogh's murder.

It is unnerving to the Dutch to think that quite a number of the immigrants who were drawn to their country for the freedom and prosperity it offered now look upon it with hatred. A growing number of radical imams in mosques subsidized by the Dutch government now preach the annihilation of European culture and speak of their hosts as enemies worthy of destruction. Many Dutch, German, French and British citizens have begun to question the assumption that a compassionate, inclusive liberalism can embrace and pacify radical Islam – or even generic Islam.

Street scene in Amsterdam

Several journalists have said that this one murder has hit the Dutch as hard as 9-11 hit the Americans. That may be an exaggeration, but it has certainly prompted widespread and open soul-searching. Wrote one prominent Italian journalist: this event probably marks "the end of Europe's utopian multicultural dream." It has precipitated an identity crisis among Europeans, he said.

Why this strong reaction to a single, admittedly grotesque, murder by one disturbed individual? Van Gogh was hardly a pillar of the community; he was an offensive, obnoxious personality who was easy to hate. His recent film about discrimination against women among Muslims made its point in the most outrageous way possible. It featured women in see-through gowns with verses from the Quran printed on their bodies – a deliberate provocation to Muslim beliefs. Van Gogh made a career out of assaulting the values of faith communities, Christian and Jewish as well as Muslim, that differed from his. In some sense, he made himself a target.

The killer, Mohammed Bouyeri, was born in the Netherlands of Moroccan parents. His Dutch was better than his Arabic, as he had attended Dutch schools, and until recently seemed to be well on his way to becoming a productive member of Dutch society. Said one member of the Dutch parliament: Bouyeri "was not a failure...but an average, second-generation immigrant. He spoke Dutch and was Dutch. He was one of us."

That cannot be said of a huge proportion of the Muslim community: many know little or no Dutch. They live their lives within their ethnic ghettos, which now swallow up almost half of some of Holland's biggest cities.

Those who knew Bouyeri described him as a nice guy. But the man changed after (before?) he began attending one of the radical mosques. In the community center where he was working, he suddenly tried to impose Islamic standards, banning alcohol and mixed-

See Dutch *on page 2...*

Theo van Gogh's career combined directing, acting and writing

The Supreme Court leaves the status of marriage to the government

Harry der Nederlanden

"Several centuries ago it would have been understood that marriage should be available only to opposite-sex couples," the Supreme Court of Canada ruled this morning. "The recognition of same-sex marriage in several Canadian jurisdictions as well as two European countries belies the assertion that the same is true today."

The judges said that the days when Canada was largely a Christian society "of shared social values where marriage and religion were thought to be inseparable are past.

"Canada is a pluralistic society. Marriage, from the perspective of the state is a civil institution," they wrote. "Our Constitution is a living tree which, by way of progressive interpretation, accommodates and addresses the realities of modern life."

Canada's federal government may therefore change the legal definition of marriage, the court said. But it found that, while Parliament has the power to redefine marriage, it is not compelled to do so.

The Supreme Court's advisory opinion is important, however, as much for what it didn't say as for what it did. It did not answer the divisive question whether restricting marriage to heterosexual couples is contrary to Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It deferred that decision to the political arena and the government.

The court refused a government request to say that the Canadian Constitution requires the legalization of homosexual marriage, refusing to give the Liberals a political weapon that would have made it easier to push its draft bill through Parliament.

Following the court decision, Prime Minister Paul Martin an-

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News

Dutch.... *cont from p. 1*

sex meetings. So why not treat Bouyeri as an exception, an isolated instance, a young man who went off the deep end?

It turns out that Bouyeri did not act alone. He had links with a number of other militants and radical groups, who helped him plan the attack. According to one report, he had six accomplices; another said that 40 men had been arrested in connection with the murder. Bouyeri had connections with a radical network that extends to Spain, Germany, Iraq and Morocco.

Children and teachers wait outside their severely damaged school in Eindhoven. The Islamic school was firebombed.

Little wonder, then, that the Dutch government announced intentions to crack down on radical imams. Some steps had already been taken before the murder to put the brakes on militant imams who are preaching stridently anti-Western sermons that incite hatred. Many of them come to Holland directly from Wahhabi mosques in Arab countries and know little or no Dutch. The government now insists that they must take Dutch lessons, reasoning that at least they should have some understanding of the culture they are denouncing so vehemently. If necessary, the government threatens, it will revoke the residence permits of imams that preach intolerance and violence.

The government is planning to provide additional funding for the Dutch security agency. It is considering legislation that will empower them to close mosques that threaten public order and that will enable the police to more easily detain terror suspects. Some measures being discussed are more restrictive than the much-criticized Patriot Act in the US.

Also under consideration is the closure of the separate Muslim schools so that Muslim children will be required to learn alongside their Dutch peers. These schools were funded by the Dutch government under the policy of pillarization, which allows each faith community to operate its own schools.

One outspoken Dutch politician, Geert Wilders, has seen his popularity soar among the Dutch for calling for a five-year moratorium on immigration from non-Western countries. He said that police have discovered that there is recruiting going on for Islamic jihad in at least 20 Dutch mosques. "If there is recruitment for jihad going on in a mosque," he said, "it is not a house of prayer. It is a house of war. And if it's not a house of prayer, it should be closed down."

Wilders now travels everywhere with bodyguards and he keeps changing residences. Islamists have called for his head.

Similarly, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a former Muslim critical of the place of women in Muslim society, has also been threatened and travels with bodyguards. In an interview on MacNeil-Lehrer, she warned that the growth of Islamic fundamentalism is a threat to human rights, for their treatment of women often violates principles of human rights. She pointed out, too, that she is able to criticize Islam in the Netherlands only because the country is rich enough to provide police protection.

The Dutch are acutely aware that Muslims now make up almost half the population in three of its biggest cities. In Rotterdam nearly 50 percent of the population is foreign born. A majority of children under the age of 14 in Holland's four largest cities are Muslim. Although Muslims comprise only 6 percent of the population (about 900,000) now, they have much larger families and Muslim immigrants are still entering the country at a rate of some 30,000 per year. Meanwhile, the Dutch themselves have a negative rate of growth. So the Dutch are anxious that they will eventually not only become a minority in their native land but also second-class citizens. According to a recent poll, fully one-third of all Muslims in the Netherlands are in favor of implementing shariah, the system of Muslim law that has engendered so much conflict in Nigeria. When immigrants from Turkey and Morocco began immigrating to the Netherlands some 30 years ago, they were permitted and even encouraged to retain their own language and culture, partly because it was initially assumed that they would eventually return to their own countries. Now it is estimated that more than one-quarter of this immigrant population cannot even speak the language of their adopted country.

Partly because of this refusal to learn the culture, they suffer from high unemployment and many immigrant children drop out of school, get a poor education, and end up becoming part of an under-class. This raises resentments which are exploited by radical groups. Dyab Abou Jahjah, a leader in the Arab European League, on the Lehrer news hour, for example, ranted about the discrimination suffered by Muslims in Holland, the unemployment and low educational achievements. He complained that "they have no practical political rights." The plight of Muslims in Europe, he claims, is even more oppressive than that of African-Americans under segregation.

David Pryce-Jones, writing in *Commentary*, argues that Jahjah is engaged in a deliberate strategy to radicalize more of the Muslim community. The Arab League urges Muslims not to participate in European culture and to reject any form of assimilation or accommodation. When this results in poverty and discrimination, as it inevitably must, they turn around and charge the host countries with discrimination and urge Muslim youth to a militancy that further alienates them from fellow Europeans.

Islamist ideology, suggests Pryce-Jones, has adopted some of the same strategies that were employed by another transnational ideology – Communism. Even groups that do not function as terrorist cells work hard at radicalizing the immigrant communities and instilling in them an oppositional stance to the societies in which they live. They counsel a strategy that exploits the tolerance of liberal democracy in order to kill it in the long run. And given the low birth rate among European natives and the much faster growth of the Muslim community, historians of Islam like Bernard Lewis predict that this century will see the Islamization of Europe. Europe is at a pivotal moment in its history; Europe, says Bat Ye'or, will soon become Eurabia.

Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

Julie Andrews and sphere sovereignty

Now that we have a six-year-old daughter who enjoys watching children's videos, Nancy and I are being reintroduced to some of the films we remember from our own childhood. Two which I recall with special affection are *Mary Poppins* (1964) and *The Sound of Music* (1965), both of which were graced by the magnificent singing voice of the incomparable Julie Andrews.

Only recently did it occur to me that both of these films, for all their saccharine qualities, make a point about the diversity of God's world, including human society. More to the point, each in its own way is about – are you ready for this? – *sphere sovereignty*! Yes, that's right. Sphere sovereignty, that terribly inelegant expression coined by Abraham Kuyper, and his greatest legacy to the neocalvinist movement.

In the first film David Tomlinson's character, George Banks, rules his home autocratically as if it were a financial institution in Edwardian England. His motto? "A British bank is run with precision; a British home requires nothing less!" Spending little time with his own two children, he expects to come home to his "castle," pat them on the head, and send them off to bed, assuming they have already been washed, fed and attended to by their nanny. "Tradition, discipline and rules" substitute for parental affection, and little Jane and Michael, starved for their parents' attention, make life miserable for their succession of nannies. Until . . . well, you remember the rest.

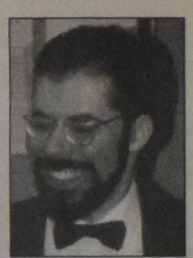
In the second movie, filmed amid the spectacular beauty of the Austrian Alps, a similar patriarchal figure, Christopher Plummer's widowed Captain Georg von Trapp, governs his brood as if they were ensigns on a naval vessel. He whistles for them and they fall into line, snapping to attention and calling out their respective names in order from eldest to youngest. He rules with a firm hand, imposing military discipline on his children, who – you guessed it – torment their many briefly-serving governesses.

Into both dysfunctional homes Julie Andrews' characters make their entrance, either from the air, born aloft by an umbrella, or on foot, striding less than confidently to the front door with a guitar in hand and a song on the lips. In both cases, they manage to set things right, restoring wholeness to an unhealthy family and cementing the ties between father and children. Happiness reigns once again.

Four decades later these films remain entertaining in their own way, although in the intervening years North American tastes have become more jaded, if not exactly more sophisticated. What is forgotten is that much of the humor in the plots revolves around the foibles of two deeply confused men, who, for all their earnest desire to do the right thing, fail to make some fairly basic distinctions. After all, a family is not a bank. A son and daughter are not employees. Nor is a family to be identified with a naval unit. A man who treats his offspring as if they were the crew of a ship is obviously misguided.

Perhaps these films were so enormously popular at the time because we in the audience understood implicitly that some things are simply different from other things. We didn't have to engage in elaborate theoretical analysis to know that a family is a family and should be treated as such. We simply knew that Tomlinson and Plummer were in the wrong, and we enjoyed seeing Julie Andrews overcoming their confusions in her own imitable way.

Which makes me wonder all these many years later: might Andrews have read Kuyper?



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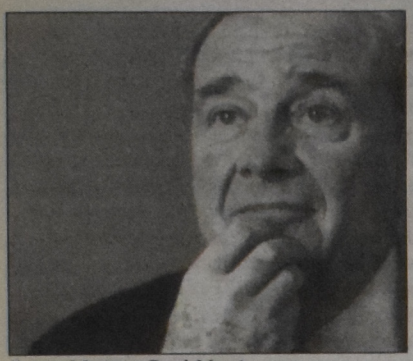
Politics

Supreme Court ... *cont. from p.1*



Prime Minister Paul Martin

nounced plans to introduce a redefinition of marriage early in 2005.

Call for a referendum

"The Court has clearly indicated that any changes to marriage must be made by Parliament and not through the courts," Focus on the Family Canada president Terence Rolston said in a press release. "Surely the Court would have ruled differently if traditional marriage was an attack on someone's basic human rights."

The debate on marriage will now continue in Parliament he added. "Hard-working Canadians need to be heard. A national referendum provides the best opportunity of ensuring that all Canadians have opportunity to speak on this critical issue."

"It is crucial that when the federal government introduces legislation to redefine marriage that Canadians across the country are very clear in their support for traditional marriage," stated Rolston. "Canadians should have the right to make their opinions on marriage heard before redefining marriage and we call on the government of Canada to respect the clear majority of Canadians who want a referendum on marriage."

"The court also said that where there is a clash of rights, religious freedom may be limited," says Janet Epp Buckingham, the EFC's Director of Law and Public Policy. "There are many religious freedom issues that the opinion does not address, including protection for civil officials and protection against discrimination for religious institutions that do not recognize same-sex marriage. Until there is legislative protection, people of faith will not be fully protected."

The court also made it clear that protecting religious freedom for clergy and religious institutions is a responsibility of provincial governments.

Buckingham says, "We call on provincial governments to enact laws that will guarantee protection for religious freedom in accordance with the Supreme Court's opinion."

"It's a sad day for our country," Gordon Young, pastor of the First Assembly of God Church in St. John's, Newfoundland, told the CBC (quoted by the Associated Press). "God is in the DNA of this nation. We believe that changing the definition of marriage is changing the divine institution that God put in place for the order of our society."

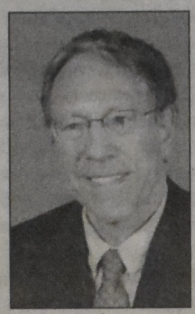
The Western Catholic Reporter noted that the Canadian Council of Churches, representing nearly all Christian churches in the country, has in recent years taken positions on anti-Semitism, the US-led war in Iraq, patenting of higher life forms, health insurance system, and the Ballistic Missile Defence system, "But when it comes to same-sex marriage, opposed by the majority of its 20 members including the largest – the Roman Catholic Church – the voice of the CCC is mute."

Anglican Bishop Michael Ingham complained that the ruling could be used as a shield to discriminate. "It means that if you're a non-believer, you can't discriminate against gay and lesbians, but if you're a believer you can. So if you want to discriminate against gays and lesbian people join a religious organization." In other words, the Anglican bishop wants the government to compel all churches to perform same-sex marriages.

The Right Honorable Chief Justice of Canada, Beverley McLachlin, P.C.

Several options

The federal government's lawyer, Peter Hogg, admitted, "It's true that the Supreme Court of Canada has not specifically said that opposite-sex marriage is unconstitutional.... But the lower courts have been absolutely consistent in saying that, so I think we can pretty much put in the bank that that is the position."



Irwin Cotler

Justice Minister Irwin Cotler said that the Court in effect said, "You have the green light to go ahead, but that's your responsibility now."

He interprets the Court's statement differently than do opponents of same-sex marriage. He argued that in answering the other questions – that same-sex marriage passes constitutional muster – the court in essence declared that the converse cannot be true. In other words, says Cotler, "the opposite-sex requirement is unconstitutional because how else could we have said that the same-sex reference is constitutional."

Andrew Coyne of the *National Post* commented: "The court may have theoretically left the issue to Parliament to decide. But there can be little doubt how it would rule if a legal challenge to the existing law was ever brought before it. Indeed, even without the Supremes' intervention, Parliament would seem to have little room to manoeuver at least in the six provinces and one territory where the lower courts have ruled: any federal legislation to the contrary could apply only in the other four provinces."

Describing the options now open to the government, constitutional expert Peter Hogg wrote: "The Supreme Court decision makes clear that Parliament has the power to enact a new definition of marriage as the union of "two persons," which would replace "a man and a woman." Justice Minister Irwin Cotler has said that the government will introduce a bill along these lines.

He dismissed the idea of a referendum as improper since it would be "putting the rights of a minority to the hazard of a popular vote." The option of keeping the traditional definition would probably be challenged in the courts and defeated, and the opposition to same-sex marriage isn't strong enough in this country to warrant the use of the notwithstanding clause, says Hogg.

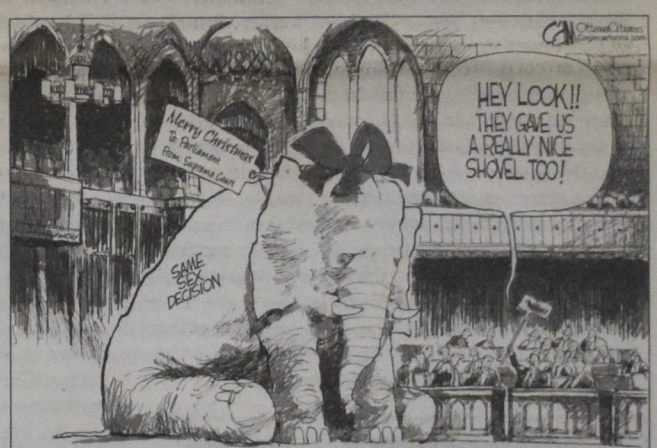
What about the civil unions option (described on p.5 by Gerald Vandezande)? Hogg says that this would throw the issue back to the jurisdiction of the provinces: "In Canada, therefore, any national civil union would have to be created by the harmonious action of 10 provinces and three territories." He concludes that therefore "We can safely forget that option."

In the past, Prime Minister Martin has expressed reservations about sanctioning gay marriages. As a Roman Catholic, he was under pressure from the church not to abandon the traditional definition of marriage as a union between a man and a woman.

After the Court decision Martin said, "It is one that I've struggled with, but fundamentally it comes down to the equality rights under the Charter. I do not believe you can have two classes of citizen."

The government is expected to introduce a bill changing the definition of marriage as between two persons. Martin has said that he will allow a free vote among ordinary members of parliament, but cabinet ministers will have to vote with the government in favor of the bill. Gay marriage appears to have the support of many MPs in two of the three opposition parties, so even if some Liberals vote against it, the bill will likely pass.

[With files from the *Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, the *National Post*, Zenit and the EFC.]



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Editorial

The two faces of time

Harry der Nederlanden

For most of us New Year's is hardly a traumatic transition. It is a more or less arbitrary marker set by convention. There's nothing in the natural order of things that forces us to make the leap from one year to the next at this time of year. It's a milepost that we could erect pretty well anywhere along the continuum of our nights and days. Were it not for that human invention, the calendar, the passage from Old Years to New Years would just be another day and night come and gone like any other. It is we ourselves who have elected to make this a special day, a dramatic transition that we mark with fireworks, food, feasting and other folderol.

But taking note of the passing of the year isn't wholly arbitrary. The passage of the years force themselves upon our notice. The calendar follows the cycles of the seasons, the changes in nature that are part of our planet and the way our solar system interacts. It is a huge timepiece. Those natural rhythms, the sequences of night and day and of summer and winter, are not just external to us either. They are imprinted into our very bodies, into each and every cell. They shape our bio-rhythms, our experience of time, and therefore our very thoughts and imaginations in ways of which we are usually unaware.

As I struggled to maintain my footing on very rough, icy sidewalks today, I became aware that the soles of my boots, the most comfortable boots I've ever owned, have pretty well lost their tread. They used to provide good traction on ice, but no longer. They are just about done for. I've extended their lives a bit longer by inserting a new insole, but one of these days I'll have to face up to the fact that my favorite boots are finished.

In this issue Ron de Boer writes about his favorite shirt. Our favorite shoes and shirts do finally wear out. With a pang, we finally consign them to the wastebasket, or if you're a sentimentalist like me, you store those old shoes in the bottom of the closet just in case you find an occasion to get one more day's use out of them. But one day you go out and buy a new shirt or a new pair of boots. Actually, I bought the boots to replace this, may favorite pair, two years ago already. But every time I wear them, I curse the passage of time that has chewed up my old boots; they were ever so much more comfortable.

Shoes and shirts are much truer markers of the passage of time than clocks and calendars. They are reminders of the fact that we are finite human beings who are not wholly yea-sayers to the passage of time. But shoes and shirts, no matter how attached we've become to them, are relatively easy to replace. One day we again find that shirt that fits as snug as a glove or that pair of boots that plants your feet so firmly on the earth that the earth bears you up and helps you onward. And you have a new favorite shirt or pair of boots.

Time in its passage also cuts deeply and leaves us with wounds that will never be healed on this side of eternity. The loss of those we love may be part of the great cycles of life and death, the sequence of generations as sons and daughters take the place of fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers. But that sort of replacement is not at all like the replacement of our favorite shirt or shoes.

The fact that we mark the passage of time by such abstract mechanisms as clocks and calendars sometimes hides from us the real nature of time. Time isn't just a matrix of rhythms that works hand in glove with those of our bodies and minds to sustain the processes of life; time also steals away our lives, our parents, our children, our wives and husbands, our lovers, our friends. It isn't just an infinite repetition of moments, each of which is the same as the one before. Time has the shape of a story. And in the middle of it, in the deep core is darkness, violence, out of which arises the cry, "My God, my God, why...?"

We mark time not just by summers and winters, but by events like World War II, like 9-11, like the tsunami that smashed into millions of lives leaving deep, permanent scars. After the Fall, time writes the story of its passage upon us with an exceedingly sharp pen. At the marking of the New Year, we wear two faces, like the two masks often used to symbolize drama, one the mask of grief symbolizing tragedy, the other the mask of laughter, symbolizing comedy. In our celebrations, we remember what is good and look forward with hope, but we also remember our losses and anticipate the coming of death.

This year the congregation of which I am part lost two members who were woven deeply into the warp and woof of our shared life. Earlier we lost Herman de Jong and just before Christmas we lost Marinus Koole. They belonged to that post-war immigrant generation that put a deep stamp on the life of those communities of which the Christian Reformed Church is the heart. They were not just strong family men, who will be sorely, achingly missed by their families, especially on those occasions that mark the passage of time – holidays, birthdays, anniversaries; they were also public persons who spent much of their time and energies nurturing institutions and organizations that formed the exoskeletons of our life together. We miss these people, unique persons, each mirroring God in unique ways, not just when they are our friends and relatives, not just because we empathize with one another in our grieving, but also because time weaves us together into a complex fabric in which our lives thread into other lives.

Herman and Marinus were part of the old guard that is quickly passing from the scene to make way for new generations. That making way and that raising up of new generations is good; it is necessary; part of renewal; but it is also fraught with pain and grief and anxiety. Marinus was part of that generation that Tymen Hofman wrote about in his history of the Canadian CRC. Many of the Dutch immigrants to the Niagara peninsula were greeted by Marinus Koole. He was one of the volunteer "fieldmen" who helped the newcomers get settled and acclimated in this strange, new country and who picked them up on Sunday to take them to church, where they met others like themselves struggling to make a new life here. Marinus was a central, steady and faithful presence in his family and he worked very hard to realize his vision of having his own business in this free and rich country. He was successful. Eventually he built up his greenhouse business Creekside Floral into a large operation that employed many people. Even when business boomed, however, Marinus never became fixated just on the bottom line and on getting bigger. It continued to be an extension of his love for flowers.

He was also part of that generation that, while nurturing sizeable families and growing new businesses, also devoted an amazing amount of time to church meetings, serving often as members of the consistory, to founding Christian day schools, concerning themselves about politics and labor in this democracy. Although a businessman, Marinus thought deeply about theological and philosophical issues as he worked for years with others to add to Christian elementary and high schools a Christian university education. He didn't just support the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, he interacted with the young intellectuals and kept them rooted in the life of the community.

There is much more I could say about the depth and breadth of Marinus' life. He was a Kuyperian, a link for the Reformed community with the generation of the Kuyperian "mannenbroeders" in the old country, who in turn were a link to the Calvinist Reformation, Augustine, Paul, Jesus Christ. Yes, Marinus, like each one of us, served as a unique root and stem that drew its nourishment in time from Jesus Christ.

As I sat in church during the remembrance service held for Marinus, listening to the tribute paid to him by his children and friends, I realized that the portrait being painted was that of a patriarch, an ambiguous term nowadays. He was a father in the old style, one who was the head of the family, a source of authority, but not without gentleness. He was a founding father, a bulwark of the church and school. He greeted one and all with an avuncular kindness and generosity. He represented a paternal embrace that put us in touch with our traditional roots and the authority of the world's structure. His was a steadying, stabilizing presence, but one that was not threatened by playful newness and experiment, because he believed deeply that God could be relied upon to uphold it all. He trusted and strove hard to be trustworthy.

As I listened to the tribute, richly deserved, it dawned on me that he and his generation will be the last to be praised in this way. My sons and grandsons will not be praised in the same way when their time comes. They won't be able to play the role of patriarchs. They will find another way to be Christian fathers and to discharge their roles in a changing society. As the old generation passes, as the church struggles to redefine itself, we often look back nostalgically and forward anxiously toward the uncertain future. What will it mean for the people of God? We grieve.

But then we remember that at the deep core of time, there where the darkness and violence wells up, threatening to extinguish the work of God, stands the cross of Christ. There where time cuts most deeply, delivering the wound of death, the great Healer stretches out his hand and the hand of the Father and of the Spirit to bring comfort and hope. He is there bringing life out of death and establishing the work of our hands in eternity.

Yes, we look back with a mixture of gratitude and grief and we look forward with anxiety, but above all with hope, for we can trust that the cycles of years and ages are in his hands.

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Opinion

Whose children are they anyway?

John Vanasselt

Some Canadian parents will be happy to know that government really does want them to have both jobs and children. In a recent Globe and Mail report, a Toronto mother was quoted as saying, "...I don't know that the government really wants women to work and have kids. It's not supported that way, for it to take so much of my money I make at my day-to-day job." Well, it seems all that is about to change. "That would work so perfect for me," she said of a just-announced plan for a combined kindergarten and child care program for all four- and five-year-olds in Ontario. Under the new program it will cost parents much less – for some it will be free – than what they are currently paying, and be much more convenient, to have their children cared for while they both work. It really is all about me!

This scheme makes Hilary Clinton's approach to social engineering seem remarkably efficient. In America she only needed a village to raise a child. We in Canada need a whole nation to do the same, and even that isn't enough – the province will add to it. The federal government has promised the provinces over $5 billion for a national program of early childhood learning and care. The government of Ontario has plans to link this program with the provincial education system and over the next decade to include all children of pre-school age. "It's much more than just child care," said Children's Services Minister Marie Bountro-gianni in *The Star*. "It's a very seamless, integrated system for children, starting from birth onwards."

Initially, the McGuinty government plans to draft a curriculum for the JK and SK kindergarten child care program. A syllabus for the younger children can't be far behind since the province is planning to establish a College for Early Childhood Educators similar to the Ontario College of Teachers. The whole point to a formal curriculum is to achieve certain goals far beyond just keeping these young children safe, warm, and fed. For a clue, just take a look at local public school curriculum especially those parts that involve values, morals, and beliefs.

The state-as-nanny has arrived and it seems we want it that way. In the previous century, certain regimes imposed the will of the state on their citizens. Those leaders are probably drooling in their graves about what seems to be a voluntary transfer of child-rearing responsibilities – "starting from birth onwards" – from the home to government. Of course, parents will still have quality time with their toddlers and pre-schoolers between 7 and 8 in the morning while the family is scrambling to eat breakfast and getting ready to go to work and school. More precious moments will be available between five and eight in the evening when everyone is tired from a long day at work and school, preparing and eating dinner and getting ready for bed. In between, government will provide this "seamless, integrated system for children."

There are really two issues here. The first is the matter of a national day care system. The whole notion of a national, government sponsored day care system deserves to be rejected out of hand. There is not even a hint of legislation to support families who choose to raise their children in their own home. The Canadian Council of Churches has asked local churches to consider supporting the scheme. Unbelievable! The second concern is this marriage of a federal program to Ontario's education system. Whose children are they anyhow? Check out the numerous scriptural references to parents and their children.

With respect to the second concern, the "integrated, seamless system, starting from birth onwards," Christians should consider the injustice of giving unto Ceasar so Ceasar can use our money for public-school-type programs that are antithetical to biblical norms. This is nothing more than an extension of the injustice that is already foisted on Christian school parents whose taxes fund a public school system that teaches values which are foreign to the believer. Christian parents who choose to have their children in day care will now be at the same point – funding a public system of child care/education which they cannot in good conscience use, and still having to pay for their own.

Governments are on a path to provide support for alternatives to traditional child-rearing, and building on the aims of public education, which is designed to be the antidote to the values and traditions of the family, this new "integrated, seamless system for children" will simply extend government's influence to a younger age group.

Christian families must continue to use political and legal avenues to gain government support for the raising and education of their children. Government has a right to require that certain standards are met for health and safety and civic-mindedness in child-care and schooling, but beyond that parents should be free to raise their children according to the beliefs and traditions of the home. The fact that government will penalize or at least establish disincentives for families who cannot in good conscience send their children to public day care or public school is discrimination.

Democracy only lives where all citizens are respected and supported by their government. The family unit is still the foundation for a democratic society. We cannot allow further marginalization of Christian families who seek to train up their children in the ways of the Lord. Christians cannot save society from itself, but they can, in the tradition of St. Paul, demand their rights as first class citizens. Those Christian parents who would choose non-government child care/education or choose to stay home with their young children, and who would choose a Christian school, should receive the same level of support.

John Vanasselt is Director of Communications for the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools

Group urges adoption of civil unions instead of redefining marriage

Gerald Vandezande

The Supreme Court of Canada has said "Yes" to the federal government's proposed legislation, which would extend the capacity to marry to persons of the same sex. This court considers the proposal to be consistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The country's top court declined to say, however, whether the traditional definition of marriage infringes the equality rights of same-sex couples.

In its reasons, the court did not adequately address a third option that has been overlooked in the debate: civil unions for all Canadians instead of government-sanctioned marriage. A group of Canadians intervened before the Supreme Court to urge the court to consider an inclusive option that would help heal the fractures created by the national debate over marriage. This group, the Working Group on Civil Unions, advocates that Parliament should pass a law that provides civil unions for all Canadians, which would take government entirely out of the business of marriage.

Such a law would put government in its proper place and would also provide true substantive equality under the law for all Canadians in relation to their domestic arrangements and intimate relationships.

The civil union proposal would replace the concept of civil marriages, and would apply to all couples, opposite-sex and same-sex, wishing to enter a legally recognized civil union. The formation and dissolution of all civil unions would be governed by appropriate legislation. The Working Group on Civil Unions believes that the civil union alternative to the redefinition of marriage is a legitimate parliamentary choice, consistent with the principles of the Charter. This proposal best recognizes the truth that justice is not spelled "just-us."

The civil union alternative was once supported by Minister of Justice Irwin Cotler who was quoted on Aug. 21, 2003 as saying, "I think there can be another option than same-sex marriage. The court may come up with the kind of advisory opinion that will be respectful of the different sensibilities at the same time as it will be consistent with the equality-rights provision under the Charter."

The only option that would achieve this is a universal civil union law.

The Working Group believes a civil union structure is the only impartial and neutral answer to the various concerns of inequality arising from the restrictions under the common law and statutory definitions of marriage to a union between persons of the opposite sex. Public justice for all should concern the public aspects of private relationships and should legally recognize that all people have the constitutional right to live in different ways and to have those ways respected by the law and government.

What is a civil union regime?

Civil unions would not be created by religious officials or be a condition of religious marriage. The fact of a religious marriage would not either deter or facilitate the entry into a civil union. Parliament would determine the capacity to enter a civil union and when a civil union would be created. Parliament would prescribe the terms and conditions of entering and terminating a civil union. The provinces would continue to determine the existence and extent of property, financial or other civil rights between members of a civil union and towards the children, if any, of a civil union.

The notion of a civil union regime overseen by government independently of religious authority is not new. Since the French revolution, it has been the norm in many

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Church Life

Revitalizing the church by learning from the first Reformation – the New Covenant Reformation

Pieter Hendriks

Tymen E. Hofman's recent book *The Canadian Story of the CRC: Its First Century*, publicized this year, has us relive many memorable events in the history of Canadian churches of the Christian Reformed denomination in North America. Among them we hear of the role the Council of the CRC in Canada has played in the not so distant past. This role can be explained as follows (The numbers between brackets are page numbers):

On November 5, 1968 the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada was organized to "give the Canadian churches a context in which to deal with concerns that were specifically in their area of interest and responsibility" (117).

In 1970, one of the Council's standing committees, the Committee on Home Missions and Evangelism, made the following urgent appeal:

That Council urge all Christian Reformed Churches in Canada to rededicate themselves to the task of bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Canadian Nation. The rededication will have to be radical, in that it will have to deal with the total restructure of congregational life, that it may be conducive to "equipping the saints" for the purpose of sharing their faith with each other and *with "outsiders (120).*

The council urged each consistory to study how to improve the structuring of its congregational life.

These words taken from *The Canadian Story of the CRC* remind us that this Canadian Council, through one of its Committees, urged us to get serious about evangelism. The first step in that direction involved "equipping of the saints." In his book Hofman does not explain what that restructuring of congregational meant. The source of Hofman's quote is the Acts of Council 1970, Article 37, p. 13 which urges "*all consistories ... to study the improvement of the total structure of congregational life that it may be conducive to equipping the saints for the purpose of communal Christian life and witness to outsiders.*

Mega Church

The special report of the Committee on Home Missions and Evangelism (pp. 37-43) lists several guidelines for rededication to evangelism. The first stresses that "*The primary responsibility for evangelism lies with each individual member of the body of Jesus Christ.*" To prepare each member for this task, another guideline says "*that the entire structure of our congregational life, from the worship service to the catechism class, [should] provide for the greatest possible opportunity for our members to learn to give verbal expression to their faith in Jesus Christ, to acquire an ever increasing acquaintance with the Bible, and to learn to discuss intelligently the basic message of the Word of God with people inside and outside of the body of Christ.*"

The Council also urged all CRC consistories to "*continuously seek to make the total structure of congregational life conducive to active involvement of the members, and to stimulate Bible study and to provide for situations where people will be encouraged to discuss the meaning of Christian living in their own lives.*"

These urgent recommendations to restructure the congregational life of their churches came at the beginning of the postmodern era and Dr. James Kennedy's Evangelism Explosion program in the early 1970s. Has this appeal fallen on receptive hearts, resulting in restructuring congregation life? Or has it fallen on deaf ears, continuing the status quo of the church, with congregations still unable to reach out effectively to "insiders' and "outsiders" alike?

Councils and members of local churches should ask themselves two questions:

a) What kind of, if any, restructuring of congregational life has been undertaken to better equip the saints, and b) How much improvement, greater success and satisfaction have been experienced through Bible studies, discussions and the sharing of faith, as well as evangelism since 1970, when the urgent appeal for restructuring congregational life was heard?

Prelude to richer congregational life

Since my arrival in Canada in 1973, I cannot remember any discussion about this need to restructure congregational life. With the exception of Home Missions and other passionately and creatively thinking people, there has been little interest in or acceptance of Church Growth theories and seminars as developed by the Institute for American Church Growth during the 1970s. It was largely rejected, despite the fact, as Christian Schwarz pointed out, that much of Church Growth's focus was on the use of spiritual gifts as the logical consequence of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers for the local church.

During the early 1980s, the CRC in Canada responded more positively to the concept of cell groups. Rather than going with cell groups, churches, in general, adopted the concept of small groups, using them primarily for Bible study, prayer and socializing. Some small groups did indeed have some success reaching out and establishing important relationships, and in some cases embraced "outsiders" who had entered the life of the congregation. In many churches the well-known Coffee-Break programs have also seen some positive results in their outreach, and the discipling of female "outsiders."

During the last two decades, many inspired leaders among laity and clergy have done much positive, creative and hard work, to bring more members to experience spiritual growth and a greater willingness to reach out within and beyond congregation. Some churches have also involved themselves in church-evaluation programs such as ABC led by Home Missions. Such programs have certainly helped churches to talk about their Christian identity, purpose, values, as well as their responsibilities towards one another and "outsiders." In some churches, members have taken part in a course on Natural Church Growth and quite a number of churches adopted the "Alpha" program.

In addition to these programs, churches have made changes in their worship services, allowed women to serve as elders and/or deacons, and in a number of cases introduced a restructuring of council by appointing pastoral and administrative elders, and have given birth to new churches (planting new churches, mothering churches) as well.

Many of these and other changes have been made out of a desire to be obedient to God's Word, to serve God better, and to become more relevant as a church in a vast changing world. Through much hard, dedicated, and valuable work by many church leaders and with the approval of councils efforts have been made to "equip the saints to share faith with other believers and with "outsiders" as well, with limited success.

One-another ministry

I believe that all what has been done through the different programs, seminars, workshops and e.g. changes in worship services over the last couple of decades have greatly helped to "loosen up" many members. They have helped them to get a somewhat different look at the church and at themselves, and to see that things in church can be done a bit differently, less

Civil unions....continued from p.5

European countries, and in the former colonies of many European states. Indeed, in many countries a couple must obtain a civil union certificate from the state.

A civil union would represent a purely governmental relationship that provided for the needs and rights of people in domestic relationships without connecting that to the religious faith of any group. Such a law would enable a just and proper separation of the state's public justice responsibilities and the legitimate concerns of faith communities. Same-gender couples belonging to a faith community that does not recognize same-sex marriage would receive governmental recognition of their civil union relationship.

The Working Group believes that only a universal civil union law would bring about substantive equality and respect the role of faith communities in a pluralistic and multi-faith society. Indeed if we take substantive equality seriously, a civil union is the only impartial and neutral answer to the difficult questions posed in the debate over marriage. A civil union law would be impartial and neutral towards all contested views of marital relationships.

In recognizing only civil unions, the state would no longer be taking sides in the marriage contest. Thus, Parliament would practise non-discriminatory public justice for all, serving the common good of all.

Gerald Vandezande

G. Vandezande is a former government relations co-ordinator of the Ontario Multi-Faith Coalition for Equity in Education. He is the author of Justice, Not Just Us: Faith Perspectives And National Priorities *and is the convenor of the Working Group on Civil Unions.*

Church Life

traditionally, and with greater joy, openness, meaning, spontaneity and satisfaction. They have helped the church to be less static and more dynamic. I believe, therefore, that the last decades have been a "prelude" or an "overture" to more rewarding experiences in terms of spiritual growth, healing of relationships, changes in one's own life, the notion of being used by the Holy Spirit to help others grow in their faith and witness as their lives are touched in new ways. I believe that we are at the verge of a great spiritual breakthrough in congregations that will see a heartwarming revitalization of congregational life – once a much needed restructuring of congregational life takes place.

This restructuring is needed to use the momentum of a developing spiritual awakening in many churches to further encourage, deepen and widen the spiritual gifts, power and energy presently demonstrated by a number of members. It will also help a growing number of members discover their spiritual potential and bring it to bear through the kind of ministry the Holy Spirit has given them.

But what kind of restructuring of congregational life fits the postmodern times we live in, will appeal to people, young and old, married and unmarried, couples and families alike, and will be attainable without giving councils more work?

Let me highlight a few biblical truths that are fundamental to any effective restructuring and revitalization of congregational life and witness. Such renewal starts with having all members take part in what Scripture calls "one another" ministry, or the ministry of Mutual Care. In this ministry all members are cared for and have the opportunity to take care of others in the congregation. We have all received this ministry from God, as the following passages and many others make clear:

Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. (John 13:14-15; NIV)

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so must you love one another. (John 13:34; NIV).

I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another. (Romans 15:14; NIV)

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32; NIV)

Therefore encourage each other with these words. (1 Thessalonians 5:8; NIV)

The priestly task of all believers

These passages about mutual care answer to the question of how to restructure congregational life to succeed in our ministry. It is rooted in what God says about what he wants us to be – namely, priests. But what congregational structure enables us to really live as priests under the headship of Christ our high priest?

We begin by looking at the Old Testament with its old covenant and the beginning of the Church of Jesus Christ. John Calvin understood that in the old covenant Christ was already the Lord of the Church. The Church of Jesus Christ did not start with Pentecost at the beginning of the New Testament, but in the Old Testament when the Law was presented to that early congregation, Israel. What is of great interest to us now is what God said to Israel just prior to giving the Ten Commandments. In Exodus 19, God said (to and through Moses):

If you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation... (Exodus 19:5-6a; NIV)

God wanted Israel to know that he wanted them to be priests, and then he explained how he wanted them to live as priests in the Ten Commandments. In the Old Testament, we learn that Israel failed again and again to be a kingdom of priests, but God promised a new covenant in which Israel would become his people (Jeremiah 31:31-33). According to the apostle Peter (1 Peter 2:5, 9) through the new covenant God's people finally become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

The New Testament reveals God's way of reforming Christ's Church: Christ's death and resurrection restructure the Church by turning believers in Christ into priests. One of the priestly tasks of believers is the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 4:11-21), which includes intercessory prayer, forgiveness, healing of souls and relationships, sharing the Good News in Christ, etc. Such priestly tasks tell us how important the ministry of Mutual Care really is. In Christ we see the first major Reformation of the Church, which I call the New Covenant Reformation. It is through this first Reformation that the priesthood of all believers was finally realized.

In the book of Acts we read how the newly reformed Church was structured. The first New Testament Church, freshly and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, came together rather frequently. Sometimes it came together as one large assembly to worship God and to listen to the apostles proclaim his Word; at other times it split into gatherings of small groups. That kind of structure suggests a divine rhythm of large and small group gatherings. Meanwhile, believers cared for each other throughout the week, and more and more "outsiders" joined their worship and fellowship gatherings.

Small group church in Cambodia

Much may be said about the loss of the priesthood of the laity during the third and fourth century, about attempts of the second Protestant Reformation to restore the priesthood of believers, as well as similar efforts by Spener in seventeenth-century Germany and by John Wesley in eighteenth-century England. I believe that there has always been a connection between a well-functioning priesthood of the laity and small-group gatherings. But the church as institute from the fourth century to the present has either ignored or neglected that priesthood, or limited its powerful contribution to the well-being of the church.

Church as organism

The historical and traditional prominence of the church as institute at the cost of the church as organism has created a church as it were "limping on one leg." Consequently, this "limping" church has always had difficulty keeping up with Jesus Christ as it tried to follow him. This "limping" church was often divided by self-inflicted struggles and conflicts, spiritually immature, lacking in zeal for "outsiders." It was not an inspiring witness for Christ in a hurting world. Most of us, if not all, have been raised in that kind of a church, the church as institute, and never have experienced the much needed and positive influence of the church as organism.

At this point it might be helpful to explain briefly the difference between the church as institute and organism. In the church as institute people learn about confessions, doctrines, listen to God's Word and partake in the celebration of the Lord's Supper and the administration of Baptism. It promotes and supports a variety of programs to further equip the saints for service. In the church as organism people are very intentional to learn how to grow in their faith, to experience such growth, to share their faith with and their spiritual gifts for each other. It encourages and helps believers to live Christ-centered lives, to minister

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Small Ministry Groups

Such a Two-Dimensional church of Small Ministry Groups is not just a theory, but a reality enjoyed by a growing number of churches around the world. Pastor Esau Reyes, for example, planted a church in Monterrey, Mexico, in 2002. Monterrey has it all – affluence and poverty, educated and illiterate. Most people have a religious background, but often it doesn't mean a personal relationship with Jesus. Pastor Reyes found that Project Philip reached those in his congregation, regardless of their education level. Today, this church has 160 people who attend Project Philip groups. "It is a cell church," says pastor Reyes. "We all meet together on Sundays, but everything else takes place in the Project Philip groups." Twenty-eight groups meet each week, studying the Bible and ministering to one another. Bible League Report (Vol.17, #1, fall 2004)

Over the last several years I have been involved in implementing the SMG vision in Terrace CRC in Terrace, BC. The transition to a fully-functioning two-dimensional church of Small Ministry Groups will take at least three years. I now have the opportunity to make myself available to assist councils develop a helpful vision for their churches and a possible restructuring of congregational life. I would consider it a honor to be involved in this kind of kingdom work and to assist those churches that desire to become a two-dimensional church themselves.

An Introduction to Small Ministry Groups is available for further discussion among council members. In it I write about the case, role and format of Small Ministry Group Meetings and Ministry. In addition, I have developed a PowerPoint program for congregations and all who want to know more about the development of Small Ministry Groups.

Pieter Hendriks (Pastor Emeritus) is a Consultant in Church Renewal and Development for the CRC. He developed his insights during his doctoral studies concentrating on "Transformational Leadership in Church Renewal," which he spelled out at length in a dissertation entitled, Blue Collar priests: The Priesthood of All Believers Fully Restored in the Two-Dimensional Church of the Third, Postmodern Reformation.

Revitalizing the church

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to each other in various ways, and to reach out to "insiders" and "outsiders" alike. The church as institute and as organism are actually two dimensions of the one same church, like two sides of one coin. They belong to each other, need each other, stim-ulate each other, intimately connect with each other, and cannot do and survive without each other. Together, they form a powerful witness in the world while fully functioning in unity.

More than one hundred years ago, Abraham Kuyper recognized the two different dimensions of the church. While he understood the institutional dimension of the church as we do, he understood the church as organism in a more limited way. The church as organism, according to Kuyper, consisted of believers becoming a visible presence in the world, engaging with the world through Christian political parties, Christian schools, Christian labor unions, etc. Kuyper saw the organic part of the church in terms of believers engaged in the social justice and cultural mandate, but he ignored the believers' involvement in the mandates of mutual care and evangelism.

This led to a stress on the "office of all believers" as opposed to the "special offices" of ministers, elders and deacons. There was considerable discussion among theologians about the different levels of authority between the different offices, as well as between the popular sovereignty of the laity and the authority of the clergy. Later this same discussion arose in North America as well. Kuyper saw a potential danger in too much "popular sovereignty," as well as in too much clerical power.

We now understand something of the cultural climate that prevented the church as organism, from receiving recognition from theologians and other church leaders. But as a result, the church continued to be robbed of the spiritual vitality, power and creativity vested and locked up in the laity. That unfortunate situation is now changing, partly due to the influence of postmodernism. The Holy Spirit is using the positive aspect of this movement to encourage and to help Christians to become more willing, obedient, creative and fruitful in personal ministry and group ministries that will further the kingdom of Christ.

Small Ministry Groups

In these postmodern times, the picture of a Spirit-inspired church of Christ-like believers, as envisioned in Acts 2:42-47, has again caught the attention of many church leaders. What attracts people today is participation in the organic dimension of the church. They liked to participate in small circles where they can trust others and feel excited, cared for and enabled to help others. Small groups provide an environment where believers feel revitalized in their faith, experience the power of the Holy Spirit, and feel empowered and encouraged to use their spiritual gifts to help restore and rebuild broken lives and relationships. Small groups allow believers to embrace their priesthood as it is revitalized through mutual ministry to one another. As that happens, the church as institute is revitalized as well.

Since the stress is on doing ministry within and through the small groups, we call them Small Ministry Groups (SMG). These are not the same as the usual, better-known small groups. Small Ministry Groups are very intentional in keeping Christ at the center of their meetings and lives, and in allowing the Holy Spirit to work through the ministry of participants during and between their meetings towards each other. They also are intentional in reaching out to people inside and outside the congregation on the basis of prayer and mutual support.

Through these ministry groups the organic dimension of the church is being reinstated and the priesthood of the laity more and more acknowledged, restored and empowered. The present, the third or postmodern Reformation points out the need to restructure congregational life, transforming our present traditional one-dimensional church (church as institute) into a two-dimensional church (church as institute and as organism). In this restructured church, the Small Ministry Groups don't introduce another program, but form the basic core around which the church is structured and organized. When that happens, the once "limping" church gets back its second leg so that it is able to properly and joyfully walk in the footsteps of its Lord, Jesus Christ, while keeping in step with the Holy Spirit.

Two Indonesian churches attacked by terrorists

Sarah Page

DUBLIN (Compass) – Assailants simultaneously attacked two churches in the town of Palu, Central Sulawesi, during evening church services on Sunday, Dec. 12, injuring at least three people.

The attacks happened despite government orders for local police to step up security in the weeks leading up to Christmas.

A bomb exploded at Emanuel church in downtown Palu in the early evening at the same time that gunmen opened fire on the congregation of Anugerah church in the south of the city, according to an ABC Radio Australia report.

The government immediately ordered tighter security during the Christmas season for churches in at-risk areas. Officials also criticized local police for not doing their job effectively.

Vice President Jusuf Kalla told *The Jakarta Post* that the events over the weekend were linked to earlier attacks on churches in the province. "The modus operandi is the same," he said. "Shoot, run, get away on an RX King motorcycle from the front of the church."

The attack on Anugerah church closely resembled the attack on Efatah church in Palu on July 18. That night during an evening prayer service, at least three men drove up outside the church on motorbikes and sprayed the congregation with bullets. Rev. Susianty Tinulele, 26, a visiting speaker at the church, died instantly, and four other church members were injured.

Masked gunmen also used motorbikes to approach the Kilo Tabernakel Pentecostal church in Poso, also in Central Sulawesi, on April 10. Firing at choir members who had gathered that Saturday to practice for Easter Sunday services, the attackers wounded seven people, including a four-year-old girl.

On March 30, 2004, Pastor Freddy Wuisan from Membuke, near Poso, was shot and killed upon answering a knock at his front door. That same day, Rosia Pilongo, the dean of the School of Law at Sintuwu Moroso University in Poso and a Christian, was seriously wounded in a drive-by shooting.

Christian lawyer Ferry Silalahi was fatally shot on May 25 as he and his wife left a church meeting in a private home in Palu.

On July 17, Mrs. Helmy Tombiling, a 35-year-old Christian woman from Poso, was stabbed to death by two men who arrived at her house on motorbikes with Palu license plates.

Unidentified snipers shot and injured Hans Sanipi, the 25-year-old custodian of the Tabernakel Pentecostal church, on October 21. Sanipi was speaking with several people in front of the church when two men on a motorbike drove by and fired into the small crowd.

On November 4, a group of men sitting outside a petrol station in Poso was intrigued when a black plastic bag was dropped from the window of a passing vehicle. On investigation, the black bag was found to contain the severed head of 48-year-old Sarminalis Ndele, a Christian pastor and the chief of Pinedapa village in Poso district.

Observers say provocateurs are doing their best to stir up renewed conflict. Officials of both the government and police forces have commended Christians in Palu and Poso for refusing to retaliate.

Aid agencies threatened by new Darfur violence

Chris Herlinger

Nyala, Sudan (ENI) – At year's end in Darfur, Sudan's western region, once nascent signs of an improved humanitarian situation are now threatened with collapse after fresh outbreaks of violence. There are no signs that even a temporary solution here is imminent.

Up to 2 million people are estimated to have been displaced, many living in camps, in the Darfur region in 2004, following fighting between Sudanese government forces and rebel groups.

"The people in the camps are stuck between a past they don't want to remember and a future they cannot see or even glimpse," said Anne Lise Fossland of Norwegian Church Aid, one of the partners of the Action by Churches Together (ACT) International and Caritas Internationalis programme in Darfur.

"These people are in great despair; they are losing hope," said one official, who did not want to be named. "Physical survival is still an issue for many."

Travel within the sparsely populated area of Africa's biggest country, to communities, camps for the displaced and to more isolated parts of the region, showed large segments of the population had received some kind of humanitarian assistance in the last six months.

Still, refugee camp residents and humanitarian officials alike have observed residents are practically being "held hostage" due to fear of leaving the camps and returning home. The situation is particularly dire for women, many of them victims of sexual assault.

The Inter Press Service quoted UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan saying, "Our approach is not working." This followed renewed fighting between Sudanese government and rebel forces, an escalation of violence against displaced persons and a possible flood of new refugees. Annan pleaded for more troops from the international community for peacekeeping in Sudan.

Before Christmas, the UN's World Food Program said that violence was still making it difficult to reach an estimated 360,000 persons within Darfur.

Violence in Darfur continues to cast a pall over humanitarian responses. On 21 December, Save the Children UK, a British relief group, announced it was suspending its operations in Darfur because four of its staff members had been killed in two separate incidents since November.

The Sudan government steadfastly denies that the displacement of people has happened because of action by its security forces and militias said to support the government.

Chris Herlinger, a New York-based correspondent for Ecumenical News International, has recently been on assignment in Darfur for several US and European humanitarian agencies.

Church

Economists, bishop at odds over Philippine population and poverty

Maurice Malanes

Manila (ENI) – Some of the Philippines' top economists say the stance of the Roman Catholic Church on family planning is "too complicated and cumbersome" for the nation's 86 million people, 40 percent of whom live below the poverty line.

The Catholic Church has yet to officially respond to the 17 economists from the University of the Philippines who presented a 22-page paper, "Population and Poverty: The Real Score," at a media briefing on December 1, challenging the church to rethink its family planning and birth control policies.

But speaking in his personal capacity, Archbishop Oscar Cruz of the Dagupan archdiocese took the economists to task, urging them to instead scrutinize how the government spends the citizens' taxes and how it serves them.

The economists had cited statistics showing that smaller families have better chances of sending their children to school and of taking better care of their health, and said poverty could be reduced through smaller families.

"People are the wealth of a country. It is mismanagement of the national economy that makes them poor," said Cruz, a former president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, in a statement. "It is incongruous to accuse the church for the poverty of the country on account of the population."

The economists had urged the Catholic Church to allow families to choose their preferred family planning method.

They said the natural family planning method the Catholic Church promotes was "too complicated and cumbersome and requires extraordinary discipline." In their paper, the economists said, "A more humane stance would tolerate the use of modern and more effective methods of family planning, besides natural family planning, provided they do not result in abortion."

They acknowledged that bad governance, wealth in the hands of a few, income inequality, and a weak economy continued to cause poverty in the country. But the economists said they also believed the country could reduce poverty if it adopted an official population policy similar to those of other Asian countries. They cited Indonesia and Thailand which, they said, had population programmes that helped to substantially reduce poverty.

But Bishop Cruz disagreed saying, "The scarcity of work is what makes them [people] unproductive, the stagnancy of salaries is what disables them to spend more. The high cost of basic necessities is what makes them hungry."

He also urged the economists to look into how government could stop massive graft and corruption, how to better manage the economy, how to distribute the country's wealth, and how to give citizens equal access to education, health, and jobs.

See related story page 19

Zambian clergy note increasing Islamic influence in the country

Moses Chitendwe

Lusaka, 15 December (ENI) – Some prominent church leaders in Zambia have expressed concern at what they see as increasing Islamic influence in the country because of Muslim groups providing food, clothes and other basic needs especially in poverty-stricken rural areas.

"Many people flock to them because of their generosity in their almsgiving practice to the needy just as Christians are expected to do," said the Rev. Baldwin Kandinda, the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa leader in Zambia. "But we in the Christian church, we seem not to be addressing this issue very much."

About half of Zambia's 10 million people are Christian, and Muslims are estimated to account for about 1 per cent.

Bishop Peter Ndhlovu of the Bible Gospel Church in Africa noted that some Zambian boys and girls were now wearing traditional Muslim garb and headscarves.

"We are treading on the dangerous ground where we are seeing the sprawling of mosques, Muslim schools and orphanages all over the compounds around Lusaka," said Ndhlovu.

"In Zambia, the Muslim minority are tolerated in a country that has been declared a Christian nation and enjoys freedom of worship where Muslims and Christians have lived side by side in harmony," he said. "But this does not mean that they should capitalize on our weakness."

The Makeni Islamic Society, based in Lusaka and headed by Sheik Abdul Kharim, a Sudanese, declined to respond to questions put to him about the numbers of Muslims in Zambia.

Youth team with children at church service

The centre has a nursery and primary school providing education for 447 pupils, with training in the Quran, Islamic knowledge and the Arabic language, according to its own Web site. It has a secondary school and a teachers training college. The centre also runs a clinic dealing with about 2,000 patients a month.

Some Muslims in the past have said they face accusations by some Zambians of being terrorists, without any substance for the charges.

In the *Times of Zambia* newspaper, Khalid Mainga wrote: "Islam teaches, cherishes and guarantees a wide range of freedoms and rights to man, Muslims and non-Muslims, including freedom of worship."

The US State Department in its International Religious Freedom Report 2004 noted that in February, Zambian President Mwanawasa spoke at the Makeni Islamic community and "urged the Muslim community to participate actively in the country's economic and political life." The report also said, "The generally amicable relationship among religions in [Zambian] society contributed to religious freedom."

God will turn human misery into glory

A meditation on Psalm 90 by Pope John Paul II

Psalm 90 is a wisdom meditation which also has the tone of a supplication. In fact, the prayer of Psalm 90 puts at the center one of the topics most explored by philosophy, most sung by poetry, most felt by the experience of humanity of all times and all places – human transience and the passing of time.

Think of some of the unforgettable pages of the Book of Job which speak of our fragility. We are like "those that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is dust, who are crushed more easily than the moth! Morning or evening they may be shattered; with no heed paid to it, they perish forever" (Job 4:19-20). Our life on earth is "but a shadow" (Job 8:9). And Job confesses: "My days are swifter than a runner, they flee away; they see no happiness. They shoot by like skiffs of reed, like an eagle swooping upon its prey" (Job 9:25-26).

At the beginning of this Psalm, akin to an elegy, the Psalmist insistently contrasts the eternity of God with man's fleeting time. This is his most explicit statement: "A thousand years in your eyes are merely a yesterday ... [as] a watch passes in the night."

As a consequence of original sin, by divine order humanity returns to the dust from which he was taken, as already affirmed in Genesis: "For you are dirt, and to dirt you shall return." The Creator, who molds the human creature in all his beauty and complexity, is also the one who "turns man back to the dust." And "dust" in biblical language also symbolizes death, the infernal, sepulchral silence.

The sense of human limitation is intense in this prayer. Our existence has the frailty of the grass that sprouts at dawn; suddenly it hears the whistle of the sickle that reduces it to a pile of hay. The freshness of life is soon followed by the aridity of death (see Isaiah 40:6-7; Job 14:1-2; Psalm 102:14-16).

As elsewhere in the Old Testament, the Psalmist associates this radical weakness with sin: In us there is finiteness but also culpability. Because of this, the wrath and judgment of the Lord also seem imminent: "Truly we are consumed by your anger, filled with terror by your wrath. You have kept our faults before you ... Our life ebbs away under your wrath."

At the dawning of a new day, this Psalm shakes our illusions and our pride. Human life is limited – "Seventy is the sum of our years, or eighty, if we are strong," the Psalmist affirms. Moreover, the passing of the hours, of the days, and of the months is laced with "sorrow and toil" and the years themselves seem like "a sigh."

Here, then, is the great lesson: The Lord teaches us to "count our days" so that, accepting them with healthy realism, "we may gain wisdom of heart."

But the Psalmist requests something more of God: that his grace sustain and gladden our days, yet so fragile and marked by affliction. That he make us taste the flavor of hope, even if the wave of time seems to drag us away. Only the grace of the Lord can give consistency and perpetuity to our daily actions: "May the favor of the Lord our God be ours. Prosper the work of our hands! Prosper the work of our hands!"

In prayer we ask God that a reflection of eternity penetrate our brief life and our actions. With the presence of divine grace in us, a light will shine on the passing of the days, misery will be turned into glory, that which seems deprived of sense will acquire meaning.

Let us conclude our reflection on Psalm 90, leaving the word to the early Christian tradition, which sees the Psalm as having in the background the glorious figure of Christ. For the Christian writer Origen, in his "Treatise on the Psalms," the resurrection of Christ gives us the possibility to rejoice and be "glad all our days" because Christ's passion is the source of our life beyond death: "After being gladdened by the resurrection of our Lord, through which we believe we have been redeemed and will ourselves also be resurrected one day, we now live the days that remain of our life in joy, exulting in this confidence, and with spiritual hymns and songs praise God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Origen – Jerome, *74 Homilies on the Book of Psalms*, Milan, 1993, p. 652).

[Translation by ZENIT]

Family

Being on the sunny side:

How Christian parents can choose joy

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

When my son Jason – 8-years-old at the time – made a colorful birthday card for his friend, he wrote inside, "Remember to be on the sunny side of the day." At the time I delighted in his encouraging advice which reflected his positive, cheerful character. But years later I appreciate his words for another reason. They illustrate the pathway that my husband and I have chosen to follow as we've raised our five children – the way of joy.

In The Road to Daybreak: A Spiritual Journey, Henri J. M. Nouwen says that moment by moment we can choose to respond to events or people with joy instead of sadness: "When we truly believe that God is life and only life, then nothing need have the power to draw us into the sad realm of death. To choose joy does not mean to choose happy feelings or an artificial atmosphere of hilarity. But it does mean the determination to let whatever takes place bring us one step closer to the God of life" (Image Books, Doubleday, 1988, pp.138).

Christian parents can choose joy for their families by following the path that God has designed for healthy living. Here are some suggestions.

First, no matter what our circumstances are like, we need to be in touch with the real Joy-Giver, our Father in heaven. Trying to muster up joy inside ourselves and in our homes by our own efforts is foolishness. Joy isn't born that way! We need to go to the Source. The psalmist David says, "You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand" (Psalm 16:11b). When we commune with God, we realize that "the precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart" (Psalm 19:8b). When we sit at his feet, we learn why Jesus tells us to obey his commandments and to remain in his love: "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete" (John 15:11). When we listen to our Master, we hear his promise that "no one will take away your joy" (John 16:18). Not only that – we learn about God's guarantee that one day we will be presented "before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy" (Jude 24). During personal and family devotions, bedtime prayers with our children, and worship in our church communities, we will experience joy – the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Second, we can choose joy in our financial situations by acknowledging that all we have is a gift from God. On that foundation, we can make financial choices that will enhance our families' joy. By giving frequently and generously to worthy causes, we'll experience the joy of being a blessing to other people who have far less than we do. By denouncing and fleeing from materialism – storing up for ourselves "treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy" (Matt. 6:19) – we will affirm our identities, not as consumers, but as God's children placed on earth to serve him. We'll show materialism up for the false god that it is, one that destroys joy with its insatiable hunger for more goods. When we experience financial difficulties, we can bank on – not our faith in the dollar – but on our faith in God who knows what we need before we ask him (Matt. 6:8b).

Our children watch us, including our attitude to money and material things. Albert Einstein said, "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted." Do our kids see us busily counting our material possessions – the things that can be counted, but don't really count? Or do they notice us emphasizing things that can't be tallied – reading books, sharing meals, volunteering, worshiping, praying – but that really count?

As we choose the path of joy in financial matters, our kids will learn important lessons. Several years ago when I asked my 12-year-old son Benjamin if he had thought about what he would like for Christmas, he replied, "No."

"Good," I answered.

He asked, puzzled, "Did you hear what I said?"

"Yes, I did. I said 'good' because you're not caught up in thinking about what you want for Christmas."

"There's nothing that I really need," he replied. His answer revealed that he understood the difference between needs and wants – a key concept in choosing the path of joy in financial matters.

Third, we can choose joy by being good news families in what seems to be a predominately bad news world. That doesn't mean that local events and global circumstances will never discourage or frighten us. However, like the shepherds who heard the angel's "good news of great joy" (Luke 2:10b) and like the women who hurried away from the tomb on the first Easter morning "afraid yet filled with joy" (Matt. 28:8b), we can keep our ears tuned for God's resurrection rhythm instead of being deafened by death's despairing drumbeat. One way we can do this is by volunteering in our communities. Instead of from the sidelines cynically lamenting homelessness, poverty, illiteracy, or any number of other social problems, we can do our part to alleviate them. When we tell our children about our experiences, they will observe our joy in helping others – even if we can't solve all the world's woes. In *The Power of Generosity: How to Transform Yourself and Your World* Dave Toycen, president and CEO of World Vision Canada says, "More and more it appears that we were created to find satisfaction in serving others" (HarperCollins, 2004, pp. 27-28). Kids will observe that truth when their parents volunteer.

Besides volunteering, parents of good news families can teach their kids that they are not powerless victims of their circumstances, but that they can choose whether adversity will make them bitter or better. Parents can point their children to the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk who experienced hard times, yet proclaimed: "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen, and no cattle in the stalls, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior" (Habakkuk 3:17-18).

Fourth, in a culture saturated with false ideas about what makes our bodies worthwhile and beautiful, Christian parents can choose joy by teaching their kids biblical truths about their bodies. Isaiah said that Jesus "had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2b). If Jesus wasn't beautiful according to the world's standards, why then do we his followers make decisions that trap us behind what sociologist Rose Weitz calls "the prison bars of the beauty culture" (*Rapunzel's Daughters: What Women's Hair Tells Us About Women's Lives*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004, pp. 224)? We won't experience joy behind those prison bars. But if we affirm that our bodies are gifts – no matter what their shapes or capabilities – we will marvel at how intricately they are designed, each unique and special, and will not waste our time and money trying to be and look like the cultural ideal. Instead, we'll celebrate all we can do with our bodies – for God's glory!

By choosing the path of biblical joy, parents point their children to the Truth. The apostle John said about his spiritual children, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth" (3 John 7). Christian parents say "amen to that!"

What are you willing to give up ?

William Vander Beek

We hear so much about equality-rights. We, too, can always find something that we want to gain yet, to become more equal to those more privileged.

Listen: Jesus, when he came to us, gave up the most important equality-right he had. We read about it in Phil. 2. It says about Jesus: "He was in the form of God"; that is, he was equal to God. But he was willing to give that up: "Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard *equality with God* as something to be exploited" (Phil. 2:6, NRSV); or he did not cling to it to benefit himself. Instead, "He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness."

No "pulling rank" for him! He gave up that equality-right. How amazing!

What does that mean for us? An interesting example of it comes to mind. It's in 1 Sam. 18. Crown prince Jonathan, son of king Saul, makes a covenant with David, his rival for the throne. How? He "took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt."

He was ceding his right to the throne to David.

But now it begins to hurt. For the apostle tells us that what the Son of God did is an example that we must follow in life. "Let that same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus" Phil. 2:5.

How do we put that into practice? Well, Paul in this passage applies to our mutual relations within the body of Christ: "in humility regard others better than yourselves" and "Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others."

That's good for starters. How about trying to live this "mind of Christ" in as many ways as he calls us to. Yes, that would be a good *New Year's Resolution* !

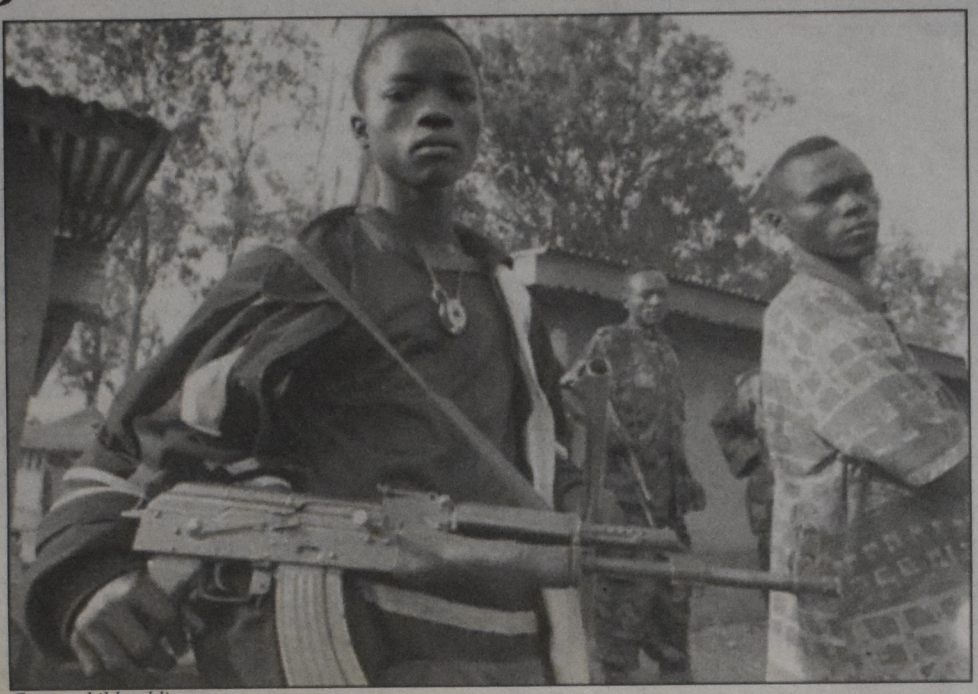
Rumblings of war in heart of Africa

Abraham McLaughlin and Duncan Woodside

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA AND KIGALI, RWANDA – There's an eery familiarity to the military maneuvering in and around Congo, a giant nation in the heart of Africa.

Some observers worry that the region is slipping into a second African "world war" – a repeat of the 1998-2003 conflict that involved troops from six nations and left 3 million dead.

Refugees are now streaming out of eastern Congo. Congolese troops are positioning near the border with longtime rival Rwanda, which is threatening retaliation. Congo's young president, Joseph Kabila, reshuffled his cabinet after an alleged coup attempt and has apparently discussed getting military help from Angola and Tanzania.



Congo child soldier

Yet there are also signs that this war could be more easily prevented than the last. For one thing, this time the players have more to lose. Rwanda, for instance, gets most of its budget from outside donors and risks losing the money if it goes to war. And outsiders like South Africa want access to Congo's gold, diamond, copper, and other resources – hard to extract amid conflict.

For sure, though, it's a high-stakes game. If by bringing in troops and improving ties with anti-Rwandan militias, Congo's leaders "are creating an ad hoc army" to take on Rwanda, "they could have a real problem on their hands," says Richard Cornwell of the Institute for Security Studies in Pretoria. Partly that's because "the Rwandans are the best in the business" of waging war in Africa.

Rwanda is tiny – smaller than the state of Massachusetts. Congo is more than three times the size of Texas. But Rwanda jump-started the 1996 rebellion that ousted Congo's (then Zaire's) longtime dictator Mobutu Sese Seko. It also helped spark the rebellion that started the first big war in 1998. That conflict's rate of killing – including deaths by starvation and illness – was the equivalent of one Sept. 11 every day and a half for five straight years. A peace deal brokered by South Africa in 2003 ended the conflict and set up a power-sharing plan that included Rwanda-backed rebels in a transitional government. Congo aims to have elections by 2005.

Indeed, "The whole story of the Congo [conflict] is about the relationship between Congo and Rwanda," says a regional analyst who asked not to be named.

In the saga's latest chapter, early in December month, two renegade militias in Congo occupied the eastern city of Bukavu for a week. Congo accuses Rwanda of actively backing those militias. Congo responded by chasing the groups out of Bukavu and putting 5,000 to 10,000 troops near the Rwanda border.

Rwanda reacted forcefully. "We shall not sit back and watch these developments, as we have a country and people to defend," said Rwandan Foreign Minister Charles Muligande.

Besides the Rwanda tension, there was apparently a failed coup in Congo's capital, Kinshasa, on June 11. But it may not point to instability. Some figure Kabila orchestrated it to give himself an excuse to reshuffle the cabinet and consolidate power. In fact, some see the "coup" and the eastern troop deployment as pro-active efforts to assert more control over his notoriously ungovernable nation.

"We can't just assume that every time a gun goes off in Africa it's the start of another big war," says the regional analyst, asserting that Kabila's moves may be, at base, domestically motivated, rather than an effort to stir up trouble with Rwanda.

If so, Kabila will have to assert control over the wild eastern region and convince Rwanda that Congo will contain anti-Rwandan rebel fighters, which have been holed up in Congo since the 1994 genocide. Many of them were genocide perpetrators. Rwanda claims they still number about 20,000 and cites their presence as reason for continued involvement in Congo.

Anecdotally, there's evidence of growing Rwandan reinvolvement in the area. Since late last year, increasing numbers of families in Rwanda's capital, Kigali, have talked about being afraid for the safety of their sons, who they say have gone to Congo. In Bukavu, many renegade militia troops wore brand-new uniforms – hints of Rwandan support.

Eastern Congo is also rich in resources, which partly explains many states' involvement in the 1998 war. There's copper, diamonds, coltan – used in cellphones and laptop computers – and methane, among other things.

Methane is key for Rwanda, given its severe electricity shortage. Rwanda has gotten a flood of foreign financial aid, in part out of guilt over inaction during the genocide. It's also courting foreign investors hard. In all, its construction sector grew some 16 percent last year. Thus the growing demand for electricity and the desire to tap methane beneath Lake Kivu, which straddles the Rwanda-Congo border. To its critics, Rwanda's methane appetite helps explain the occupation by Rwanda-friendly militias of Bukavu, which sits on the banks of Lake Kivu.

Yet Rwanda would lose much amid an all-out war. Loss of international aid would severely strain its economy and deter outside private investment. A new war could see Rwanda losing remaining goodwill sparked by genocide-related guilt.

Outside powers also have lots at stake. Uganda was heavily involved in the 1998 war. It too risks losing big budgetary support from foreign donors. South Africa seeks to reap economic rewards of a stabilized continent. South African President Thabo Mbeki has warned of a real possibility of "catastrophic war."

The United Nations' most-expensive peacekeeping operation in the world is in Congo. "People want to see a return on that investment," says the regional analyst. Indeed, on Monday, a UN helicopter fired on one of the two renegade militias – the first such action by this UN team. Even the US has sent a top diplomat to promote peace. In 1998, the parties were "left to their own devices" by outside powers, says the analyst. Not this time.

But much depends on the moves of the two renegade groups that started the crisis. One, led by Col. Jules Mutebutsi, retreated Tuesday into Rwanda. The other, which has regrouped north of Bukavu, is led by Gen. Laurent Nkunda. In a phone interview, he says he'll react to the next moves by his allies in Kinshasa. "I will make my next move [when they take] a new position," he says. That means the unfolding drama in Congo's capital is key.

Democratic Republic of the Congo and area map

Short Story

Favorite shirts

Ron de Boer

Since good CRCs don't believe in luck, I guess I can't ask you if you're wearing your lucky shirt today. I'll bet (oops! – can't bet, either!) you have a – shall we call it *favorite* – shirt or blouse hanging in your closet, folded in your drawer or draped over the chair in the corner of your bedroom. It's the shirt you wear to congregational meetings, the grocery store and Wednesday night Euchre night with your friends.

You think no one notices when you wear that shirt to every meaningful event in your week. Every time you stand in front of your closet deciding what to wear – vowing you're going to wear something different – you convince yourself wearing *old trusty* one more time won't hurt.

After all, you feel great in that shirt. In fact, it changes the shape of your body into something more pleasing than all your other shirts when you stand in front of the mirror and check yourself out before heading out the door. You can feel its power transform you. To the outside world, it's a striped golf shirt or a crisp white blouse with fine white buttons and a frilly collar to boot; but you feel like Wonder Woman or Captain Incredible when you wear that shirt.

I'm wearing my favorite shirt as a write this. It's a wine red T-shirt with a funky NIKE inscription on the front. It's a shameless advertisement for a multi-billion dollar corporation, but I like the way the color seems to add a pleasant tint to my skin tone when I walk past the hallway mirror. I like the firm collar and the way it doesn't make my chicken neck look too long. It doesn't hang on my skinny frame like some T-shirts do; it sort of puffs out at the bottom so that I resemble a body-builder.

Okay, mirrors lie. I will *never* look like a body builder, but I feel good in that shirt so why shouldn't I put it on every day after school when I climb out of my teaching monkey suit?

My *old* favorite shirt was a golf shirt I bought in the early 90s. It lasted the normal cycle of a new shirt. I bought it in the spring, wore it all summer and fall then put it away for the winter. The following spring I took it out, tried it on, did a pirouette in front of the mirror and deemed it wear-able for the new summer season.

The following spring, I took it out again and noticed it was a bit faded. The swirly design of different greens seemed a bit out of date, too. I relegated it to the *bottom drawer* – that place where all clothes go before being placed in a fashion body bag and carted off to the Salvation Army donation bin.

Each year I'd take out that shirt, hold it up, put it on, pirouette and decide against wearing it. But I always put it back, knowing one day, I'd wear it again.

That day came one fateful morn when I got up early, got dressed, ate breakfast and schlopped coffee on the shirt I had chosen for that day. To my surprise, a few minutes later, I found myself in our darkened bedroom, holding up my favorite shirt from several years back. I cast a glance at my sleeping wife, snuck my head and arms into the holes and pirouetted happily in front of the mirror. I tip-toed past the teen queens' bedrooms – the age of that shirt alone had the power to wake them up and taunt them to shake their heads at me.

During first period at school, while happily writing notes on the board, thinking how great that shirt looked on me, one of my wise-cracking grade 12 media students said to me, "Sir, the 80s called. They want their shirt back." Everyone cracked up, of course.

I told them my favorite shirt story and that this was its final day out in the real world before retirement. The wise-guy's friend said, "Sir, my grandmother's couch called – it wants its pattern back."

I threatened to flunk both of them. The shirt has never seen the light of day again.

I know I share my *favorite shirt disorder* with at least one other person in our church. This person actually became the bane of my existence every Sunday morning one summer a number of years back. I had gone out and bought myself a nice navy blue golf shirt, the collar of which had a line of yellow that gave that shirt a touch of Sunday morning class.

I wore it proudly on its maiden voyage to the church. I sang better that morning and gave a tad more in the collection plate, too. If the deacons knew the power of a new shirt, they'd consider handing them out before the fall fundraiser.

As I walked out chatting with friends, I knew it was going to be a good summer in my new navy golf shirt.

The very next Sunday, while scanning the bulletin announcements happily in my navy blue shirt with the line of yellow in the collar, I glanced up and nearly choked on my peppermint. To my horror, I saw my shirt walking down the aisle and settling itself into a pew with the rest of the body on which it hung.

What a coincidence! Roy-from-the-middle-pew-section and I had bought the same shirt.

I immediately began to strategize when to wear my new shirt so as to avoid another Twin Day at the old CRC. Anticipating that Roy would not wear his favorite shirt two weeks in a row, I decided to wear it again *next* Sunday when Roy wore his old favorite Sunday shirt. That way, he'd wear it the following Sunday, I'd wear it the Sunday after that and so on.

Trouble is, Roy wore that nice navy blue shirt with the line of yellow *every stinking Sunday for the rest of the summer and fall.* By July, I couldn't wear my new favorite shirt any more. Thanks, Roy. Don't think you got away with wearing one shirt for the entire summer without at least one person noticing.

Another reason I know I'm not alone with my favorite shirt theory is my college roommate back in the decadent 80s. When everyone else was buying multiple pastel-colored polo shirts with little green alligators on the chest or rugby shirts with stiff collars, my college roommate was wearing his blue T-shirt – as we discovered one Sunday afternoon during the autumn of our freshman year.

We were in the common room of our dorm impressing some girls from a neighboring dormitory. Someone got the bright idea that we should all fetch our high school ID cards to show how much we'd changed from our first year of high school to our first year of university. My college roommate experienced one of those moments when all the gods of misfortune (if you believed in such things, of course!) seem to sneak up on you and reveal to the world a long pattern of your flawed nature. In this particular example, my roommate discovered that there is nothing you can do to stop the realization in everyone present that you have a favorite shirt disorder.

We laid out our ID cards in order from top to bottom – top cards in grade 9, all the way down to the grade 13 cards. In my roommate's grade 9 card, he is wearing a baggy dark blue T-shirt; in his grade 10 picture he is wearing a slightly less baggy blue T-shirt; in grade 11, his T-shirt fits a bit better, but it is less blue; in grade 12, my roommate's faded blue shirt is tight across his chest and biceps; in grade 13, my roommate is wearing the same now extremely faded, extremely tight T-shirt. But that's not the reason we were all splitting our guts laughing on the old tweed furniture in the dorm common room that afternoon. My poor college roommate was wearing that same tight, faded, threaded T-shirt *that afternoon*!

Years later I would get a small taste of what my roommate went through that day. My own favorite shirt *reveal* occurred one summer when all the pictures of our family trip to the east coast came in from Black's Studio. As we were showing my parents the shots of various family members on the rocks of Peggy's Cove or in front of Halifax harbor at Pier 21, it began to dawn on me that I was wearing the same gray T-shirt with the word HOOPS on the front.

I, of course, did everything I could to take their eyes off the photo-album. I distracted them with offers for another cup of coffee. I drew their attention outside where someone interesting was walking his dog in front of our house. It was the 13 year-old who announced to everyone present I had worn the same shirt every day of our vacation. I clarified that I was in fact as concerned as they about personal hygiene and only happened to be wearing the shirt every time a camera was present. Nobody bought my story. Like in my college roommate's situation, it didn't help that I was wearing the T-shirt while protesting that I didn't wear the T-shirt very much.

When I was a kid, my favorite clothes were my older brother's – Ken's. I used to sneak into his bedroom after he'd left for school and steal his clothes. Roughly the same height but not even close to the same thickness as Ken, I picked out all the favorite clothes he looked cool in and wore them to school. My favorite was his red Adidas track suit, which I had my eye on for months.

When track and field day was announced, a hatched a plan to steal that track suit and high jump, sprint and leap my way to elementary school glory. The suit would be my winning edge. From my bedroom window, I watched Ken walk up the laneway and get on the high school bus. Then I tiptoed into his room, grabbed his track suit, stuck it in my gym bag and headed up the laneway to catch my bus. When I got to the school, I raced to the washroom and put on the track suit. When I emerged on the playground, I fully expected everyone to stop their climb up the monkey bars or hopscotch silliness and just stare at that track suit. Surely they would think an Olympian had come to visit them that day.

At the end of the day, I didn't win a single race, placed behind several classmates at the high jump venue and ripped a gash in Ken's track jacket after leaping over a fence to retrieve an errant discus – thrown by me, of course. To top it off, the girl I liked told me my pants looked like they were going to fall down.

When I got home, I snuck the track suit back in Ken's drawer, made myself a chocolate milk and plunked my sorry butt in front of the *Scooby Doo* show to forget all my troubles. A few days later, the dreaded camera did me in again. A friend's mother had snapped a few pictures at track and field

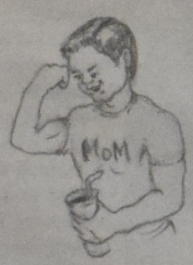
Short Story/Stewardship

day and had stuck them in our mailbox at church. There I was knocking off the bar in the high jump event, a gangly flash of crimson flying across the blue sky. There I was sprinting down the track, desperately attempting to hold Ken's too baggy pants up. Cue the first punch in the head from Ken who stared in dismay at the pictures on the long car ride from church to farm.

That day marked the beginning of a lifetime of booby traps – including lawn darts perched on the top of his door – Ken set up to thwart any future intruders to his bedroom.

I did learn my lesson. Other people's clothes do not make you a better person. One of Shakespeare's characters says, "Apparel oft proclaims the man." What you wear tells the outside world what you're about. Trying to turn myself into someone else by what appears on the outside doesn't work long term. You might fool someone in the short run by your outer costume, but the character inside will always be revealed over time no matter what the apparel proclaims.

The clothing industry earns its millions on this idea: we see a future view of ourselves in advertisements and we believe our whole person can be transformed with the purchase of clothing. The good news is you don't get a punch in the head for shopping at the Gap. The problem comes in when you buy that shirt that you think looks marvelous on you – transforms you, in fact – and the next thing you know that shirt is now your favorite, *oft worn* shirt and you're showing up wearing it in every picture in the photo album.



I find no evidence in the Bible that Jesus gave a hoot about the clothes he wore. I expect in those days he probably wore the same robes most days. He said, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the fields grow? They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these" (Matthew 6:25,28).

The Bible, you might be surprised to know, can, in fact, be read as a fashion guide, telling us to clothe ourselves in splendor (Psalm 45:3); clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus (Romans 13: 14); clothe ourselves with compassion (Col. 3:12) and humility (1 Peter 5:5). I don't think Zellers sell a line of clothing like that.

I would go so far as to argue we should be aware of the person – politician, salesperson – who dresses, as Shakespeare says, to proclaim themselves. Jesus said, "Watch out for false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ferocious wolves" (Matt. 7: 15). He was talking, of course, about people who were trying to unseat Christian teachings, but the lesson applies to many contexts.

In some ways I was a wolf (perhaps with no teeth!) dressed in sheep's clothing that day in the red track suit. When I arrived on the field, I was hoping everyone would think I was one lean, mean athlete with which to be reckoned. Of course, the track suit doesn't win races just as the suit and tie the minister is wearing doesn't deliver a meaningful sermon or the suit or dress you're wearing doesn't make you a better Christian as you sit and listen to the sermon.

Wouldn't it be great if Adam and Eve never sinned so that fig leaves and thermal underwear might never have become necessities? We'd all be walking around naked in a perfect world. But what would Canadians have done in such a world? Easy answer: I don't think Canadian winters would be a part of a perfect world. Alas, Eve bit the apple and those first fig-clothes became a symbol of mankind's sinfulness.

But fast-forward several hundred years. As soldiers gambled for his clothes, Jesus died naked on the cross for that original sin and every sin committed since.

I have a feeling Sunday suits, favorite T-shirts, and intimidating track suits won't mean a hill of beans in the afterlife. They shouldn't here, either.

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick DeGraaf

A child called charity

But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. (David, 1Chron. 29:14)

Near the end of his life, David instructs his son Solomon in the presence of all his leaders and officers in giving. He has just committed tons of gold, silver and precious stones to the campaign for building the temple. His example stimulates his leaders also to willingly give. His life and his giving are a testimony of his devotion to God, and he considers it a privilege to donate to building a temple that honors his God.

Consider how your life's end giving is a testimony of your living. I've asked Harry Boessenkool our Regional Representative for BC to introduce a giving tool that may help you leave a 'testimony'. Harry writes the following:

In the process of considering Estate Planning strategies, Christian Stewardship Services (CSS) has developed the concept 'A Child Called Charity'. In simple terms, this means that when it comes time to divide your estate, what is left over after taxes, funeral expenses etc., is divided by the number of children you have – plus one. If you have one child, fifty percent of your estate would go to charity and the other half to your child. If you have nine children, ten percent would go to charity and the other 90% would be divided among your children.

In the newer translations of the Bible, the word "love" replaces the word charity. That probably says it all. Throughout our lives we teach our children to keep a place in their heart for the Lord, to remember him in our daily studies, work and leisure. How appropriate then, that in our last will and testament to reserve a place for 'A Child Called Charity'. Even if we do not have children, we can include 'A Child Called Charity' in our wills.

Some things to consider when you include 'A Child Called Charity' in your Will:

1. Are your own adult children economically self-sufficient?
2. Have you assisted your children in obtaining higher education?
3. Have you assisted your children in purchasing their own home or a business?

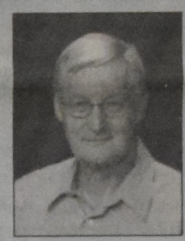
If the answer to any of these questions is yes, the 'A Child Called Charity' concept would work very well. It is a fair, biblically justified way of dealing with an estate. For younger couples who are doing their first will, these questions do not (yet) have an answer and the concept of 'A Child Called Charity' may not be appropriate.

CSS recommends the use of the concept 'A Child Called Charity' and can also serve an important role in acting as the distributor of your apportioned gift. To do so, CSS is named as the charity in your will. We assist the donor in writing a Letter of Direction indicating which charities are to be supported once we receive the gift, whether sooner or later. The letter does not mention amounts, but only percentages that are to go to each organization. This Letter of Direction can be changed at any time without having to change the will. It also facilitates obtaining probate of the will as there is only one charity that needs to be contacted and provided with a copy of the will.

If you think this concept applies to your own situation, we suggest you contact one of the CSS representatives in your area for a free initial consultation.

Stewardly Tip: Energy Efficient Ovens – Self-cleaning ovens are much more energy efficient than regular ovens. The additional insulation and better door sealing that makes it possible for the oven to incinerate spills makes for a quicker rise to set temperature and a cooler kitchen in normal baking mode. You save even more energy, of course, if you don't use the self-cleaning feature very often.

Readers: We want to share your 'Stewardly Tips' so that we all can do our part to make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Please write or email or visit the *CC* website. Please leave your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or, if we need to, we can ask you for more details.



Next issue: The Debt Millstone

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CSS

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The Lord's Prayer

For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever

by J.H. Sillevis Smitt
Translated by Jack Van Meggelen

Jesus prays as his disciples sleep by Wit Stwosz

The body of the prayer has now come to an end. We have brought our life in its full breadth and length before our Heavenly Father. No need, be it physical, emotional nor spiritual exists that we have not brought before his throne of grace. Our whole lives have been placed in his loving and caring hands. This prayer began high in the heavens. It descended to our level and traversed the earth; went down into the depth of our natural and spiritual existence. It exposed the root of all evil, and finally called on the saving power of him, in whom we have life eternal, but from whose side we have strayed.

The power of evil is the underlying cause of all suffering. The evil one is the destructive power that undergirds it all. Deliver us from evil. In this way the actual prayer ends in the depth of Hell. But that cannot be the final word of a prayer. True and real prayer does not end in Hell but in Heaven. Not in desperation, but in adoration. That's why in prayer we climb from the evil tempter up to God himself "for from him and through him and to him are all things." Ultimately, all prayers must return to him. God does not only have the last word, our last word must also be directed to him.

We turn our backs on the 'prince of this world' and turn our eyes to the King of kings. We turn away from the might of evil and focus on the power of God, thus exchanging the oppression that the power of evil brings, for the glory that lasts forever and ever. The prayer is practically finished and we could now rise and return to the world.

But first we look once more to the God who saves us now and into eternity. We are safe with him. He guarantees our future. We can confidently face the world because in our heart of hearts we know with absolute certainty: Yours is the Kingdom and the Power and the glory! Forever!

The prayer ends with praise. It could not be otherwise. Unfortunately, our prayers frequently don't get beyond the begging stage. Prayer that is only made up of requests is incomplete, immature and even unhealthy. In such a prayer we tend to focus too much on ourselves who are praying, reflecting an anxiety that keeps us from being lifted above our own weakness.

A genuinely mature and living prayer leads to a communion with God which results in sheer delight. Have you ever noticed that we are never really happy as long we focus on our own needs? The key to real happiness lies in denying ourselves. As long as I am self-centred I am enslaved.

All kinds of feelings of fear, shame and self-consciousness control me as long as I worry about myself. When we find God, we lose our selves. This loss of self becomes our redemption.

A complete and healthy prayer consists of three parts: petitions, thanksgiving and praise. When we get past the plea-bargaining stage and begin to truly commune with God we become free from the preoccupation with our own interests and worries, and begin to give thanks. For, it is in finding God that all our needs are met.

At the same time, our thanksgiving blossoms into praise which finds expression in the words, for yours is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory! Forever and ever!

Who is Lord?

We want to meditate carefully on the words of this praise which Jesus teaches us. This praising worship is actually a confession. We acknowledge, "You rule, Father, you alone, completely."

We should never consider ourselves beyond criticism. Only God is always and completely above reproach or criticism. I can repeat these words which Jesus puts on my lips casually: *kingdom, power and glory*. But I do well to take a moment to reflect critically on my motives and beliefs, and see if I'm indeed saying these words with a conviction that comes from my heart. Am I convinced that I believe firmly and only in God's kingdom? Do I really mean it when I say, "for yours is the power"?

I need to make sure that the grand total of all my deepest convictions is: *yours is the kingdom and the power;* that it is not just a theory or the proper thing to say but a guiding force in the everyday decisions in my life. I need to believe that God is truly almighty, and get rid of the notion that there is power in money and possessions or guns and bombs. I need no longer believe in the power of persuasive rulers and charismatic tyrants, nor let the crowds dictate how I should live. The power of sin or the devil should not be overestimated.

Instead, I should claim consistently that at all times and under all circumstances power lies exclusively in the hands of the God whom I confess is the King of kings of all the world. God is King! Absolutely! The ultimate sovereign. Without his holy will no power on earth can make a stir, let alone launch a campaign. "And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

Whatever happens on earth, for better or worse, occurs only by the grace of God, with his divine permission, and under his direct governance and holy, perfect will. The confession, *for yours is the kingdom and the power* is a source of never-ending joy. What can any lowly creature do to me? Nothing can adversely affect me even under the most horrific circumstances.

God does not share this power with anyone. The only one to whom he has entrusted this kingdom and this power is to his son Jesus, who for our sake and deliverance allowed himself to be nailed to a cross. What on earth do I have left to fear? Even if a hostile army were to surround me, I would not fear. "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me."

We live in an insane and violent world. Dark powers play a frightening part, and we as people often feel very vulnerable and defenceless. But in this insane world we carry an assurance of great value. We live with the absolute certainty that God is King and that he, our heavenly Father, has all power, so that in the middle of this darkness and despairing folly we can nevertheless speak of glory, for ever and ever!

The first words of the Lord's Prayer *Our Father in heaven* give us a deep sense of peace; the last words, the exaltation, delight the deepest corners of our soul. God

Meditation

is King! Absolutely! He is omnipotent! He has all power! Therefore, without a doubt, his will and his love will ultimately triumph and rule over the world and the universe.

That's why the future points to a glory that no eye has seen and no ear has heard; a glory which has not been dreamed up by any human being but which God has prepared for those who love him.

Two pillars

Jesus said marvellous things about prayer. His promises regarding prayer are so abundant and so convincingly full of certainty that the poverty and sparsity of our prayers should be a cause for shame.

In all of Jesus' remarks about prayer two things stand out. He always ties true and honest prayer to faith and obedience. If you read the context of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 5, 6 and 7 this will immediately become obvious. In the verse that precedes the Lord's Prayer Jesus says, "...for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." That is, "Entrust your life to God. He knows you better than you know yourself. He sympathizes with you. Better than any earthly father, your heavenly father knows what his children on earth need. The knowledge of his love is your guarantee and should be sufficient for your faith. Trust God without any reservation and believe him unconditionally."

The verse immediately following the Lord's Prayer reads, "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." With these words Jesus demands obedience. He in fact, instructs us to fulfill the great command of love.

The hallmark of love is that it does not lose its power in the face of evil, but, on the contrary, it overcomes evil by offering forgiveness. Faith and obedience, like the pillars of a bridge, undergird the body of our prayers. This becomes rather obvious when you think about it.

Faith. We would be fooling ourselves, and may even think we are fooling God, if we pray without trusting and expecting him to hear us. Praying like that is like striking a religious pose which has no meaning nor substance. Prayer without faith is as empty and senseless as meaningless chatter, and may be compared to cutting the legs off the chair on which you are sitting.

Obedience. To pray to God without intending to be obedient is akin to tempting God. It is absurd and arrogant to expect God to do my will and supply my needs without my willingness to do his.

Death and new life

The Lord's Prayer is beyond compare. Our own prayers are as far removed from the Lord's Prayer as we ourselves are removed from Jesus. Just as he is unique as a person, so is the prayer he taught us unique. It is the perfect prayer. It places God first, at the head of the table, and places our neighbor as equal beside us. It begins with God and ends with God, begins with petitions and ends with praise. This prayer is born out of the brokenness of this life but leads to the glory that is forever and ever. In that glorious state his name is hallowed, his kingdom has come, his will is always done by his people, just as it is done in heaven by his angels.

When the old prophet Simeon saw the baby Jesus in the temple he prophesied that this child "is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel." Likewise this prayer, taught us by Jesus, becomes either our downfall or our resurrection to new life.

If I pray this prayer in spirit and in truth not much of my old, egotistical self will remain alive. Every petition of this prayer crucifies something in me that is part of my old unredeemed self. But that is not all, for when I truly pray every petition of the Lord's Prayer in spirit and in truth something new begins to live in me. Then a new person with new ideas and faith, new love and compassion, new joy and expectations is born within me.

Praying the Lord's Prayer gives rise to a new, mature self. A new person, renewed in the image of Jesus Christ.

This Jesus does not name himself in the Lord's Prayer, but that does not mean that he is not in it. He speaks in every word of this prayer, and it is filled with his Spirit. After all, who has revealed the name of our Father as fully as he? Who else has wrestled in his life and in his death as intensely as Jesus to protect and honor the holy name of God? No one has ever prayed and worked as hard as he for the coming of God's kingdom. Nor could anyone besides Jesus claim that the will of God was like food and drink to him.

Remember who fed the poor an abundance of daily bread, prayerfully and with thanksgiving to his heavenly Father. It is Jesus who, in solidarity with us, identified himself with the sins of the human race. Who else has known and endured the temptations that Jesus experienced, and who has suffered in the grip of the evil one in order to utterly defeat him?

The Lord's Prayer is certainly one of the most precious gifts that Jesus has given us. And he places that treasure in your hands. He gives it as a guide for your whole life. But this gift remains useless unless you use it under his guidance, and by asking him, "Lord, teach me to pray the prayer that you have given us."

Ask Jesus to teach you to pray it with a believing and obedient heart, willingly and with strong and glorious expectation. Lord teach all of us to pray in spirit and in truth.

Slow your pace and live more consciously

Lisa M. Petsche

We must be willing to get rid of the life we've planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us. – Joseph Campbell, author and philosopher

Some of us may be experiencing post-Christmas letdown as seasonal festivities come to an end. Others, meanwhile, are relieved to get back to normal routines and a slower pace.

For many parents of my generation, though, there is no such thing as a slow or even moderate pace, just varying speeds of fast-forward.

They are overscheduled and overcommitted, between caring for their kids (and perhaps aging parents) and chauffeuring them to extracurricular activities, performing paid work, volunteering and keeping the household running smoothly. There never seems to be enough time in the day to accomplish everything on their "to do" lists, and so they are perpetually frazzled.

When life is out of balance, attention to personal health and time with family and friends typically is sacrificed. As a result, we may feel anxious, irritable, impatient and disconnected. We may also experience physical problems, such as insomnia, fatigue, headaches, heartburn and muscle tension.

While we may be able to operate under such conditions for an amazing length of time, eventually it catches up with us. (I know this from personal experience.) If we're lucky, the damage is reversible.

Better, of course, to prevent a crisis, by striving for balance among the different aspects of our life.

For some people, this involves cutting back on commitments; for others, it may mean spending less so they don't feel the need to work as much.

The Centre for a New American Dream (CNAD) – a non-profit organization dedicated to helping people "live consciously, buy wisely and make a difference in the world"– offers the following simplification tips:

- take stock of your goals, by making a list of the five things that are most important to you (examples include family, friends, faith, health, free time, nature, community and social justice);
- take technology breaks in order to experience needed solitude;
- spend time, not money on those you care about;
- "think outside the cubicle," establishing boundaries around work time; count your blessings and savour them;
- join with others who share your values.

(Resources can be found online at www.newdream.org/.)

Because life is complicated and we can't control everything, though, no matter how much we try to simplify, a certain amount of stress is inevitable. Following are some strategies for keeping it manageable.

- Acknowledge your limits, recognizing that you can't – and shouldn't – do it all.
- Delegate tasks to co-workers and family members. Let go of the need for perfection.
- Address tasks on your "to do" list in order of importance. Set realistic deadlines, and tackle only one thing at a time.
- Attend a time management workshop.
- Hire a professional for housecleaning, home organizing, yard maintenance or home repairs.
- Don't take yourself or others too seriously. Get into the humour habit.
- Take mini breaks during the day – stretch or take a short walk, for instance.
- Use positive self-talk – for example, "I am capable," rather than, "I don't know if I can do this."
- Accept realities you cannot change and focus instead on those you can influence.
- Nurture friendships. It's important to have people to confide in. Minimize contact with people who are negative or self-centred.
- Pick your battles. Don't make a major issue out of every concern.
- Look for the good in people and situations. Give others the benefit of the doubt.
- Nurture your relationship with God through prayer, spiritual reading and perhaps a retreat.
- Make healthy lifestyle choices, including eating nutritiously, getting sufficient sleep and staying active. Schedule regular medical check-ups.
- Build in time for leisure activity, such as reading, journaling or engaging in a hobby. Start with 15 minutes a day.
- Learn and regularly practise relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, meditation or yoga.
- Use all of your vacation time. Take it in blocks for maximum benefit.
- Tactfully but firmly say no more often, when asked to work overtime, take on another volunteer project or attend a social function.
- Seek help from your family doctor or a counsellor if you continue to feel overwhelmed.

Lisa M. Petsche is a mother of three and a freelance journalist specializing in family life.

"Ironing Board" Peer Learning Group—pastors and their spouses

Pastors Learning with other Pastors

What members of peer groups are saying:

"We benefited tremendously in the ideas and thoughts we shared when we met together."

Matthew Kim – Korean Christian Reformed Fellowship - California

"My experience [in a peer learning group] has had a wonderful affect on my ministry."

Kevin De Raaf - Hamilton Area CRC Pastors' Network A - Ontario

"When I leave our meetings I feel recharged with new material and motivation for teaching and preaching."

Xavier Suarez – Miami Hispanic Task Force - Florida

As of December 1, 2004

- 49 peer learning groups funded
- 297 pastors participating
- 266 congregations represented
- groups located in 30 states and 4 provinces

For more information contact us
by phone toll free at 877-279-9994 x805
by email pastoralexcellence@crcna.org
or visit www.crcna.org/pastoralexcellence

SUSTAINING Pastoral EXCELLENCE

Made possible in the Christian Reformed Church through a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.

Are We Looking for and Developing Leaders?

James C. Dekker

Recognizing the need for leadership development

Over the last two decades books and magazine articles on leadership in and outside of churchland have accounted for the deaths of many trees. The continuing popularity of *Leadership* and the many articles in denominational periodicals and clergy journals testify to the boundless appetite in church circles for nourishment on the subject. At one point in my ministry eight of the eleven pastors in a monthly book-discussion group subscribed to *Leadership*. Today, ten years later, recent graduates of Calvin Theological Seminary among current colleagues witness to course assignments and discussions fed by articles from *Leadership* and such places as Alban Institute.

Thus the long tilling and planting of the leadership soil has been complex and stimulating. Still it is difficult to measure the harvest in either quality or quantity. In fact, if we pastors step outside our collegial groups, it is easy to find skeptics who are not convinced of the necessity, applicability or even appropriateness of this conversation within Christian Reformed Church (CRC) circles.

Doubters range from the stodgily cynical to the theologically thoughtful. On one extreme, I hear, "There's no need to study leadership. We need pastors who stick to their knitting of leading worship, preaching, teaching and visiting." On the other end, more reflective but still dubious observers remark, "The world is complex and leading churches is more difficult than ever. We certainly need good leaders in our churches; pastors are part of that mix. Yet the leadership training and models we hear most about come from the corporate world, where profits, not people and certainly not God's glory run the show."

As a pastor-preacher-missionary working in churches and missions for 26 years, I see validity in both comments. Yet leadership themes and actions are not exhausted within the narrow boundaries of those remarks. To that end I will describe related situations to make a case for developing a common perspective about leadership in Christian Reformed Churches. That is the field I know best, but believe these outlines apply to other bodies as well.

Symptoms of need in Christian Reformed pastorates

All pastors and elders I know consider it a privilege and honor to attend synods of the CRC. At synods and classis meetings delegates, visitors and advisers mix, meet, learn, study, pray and praise. Though it seems odd to some, I fully agree with the pastor who after six days of synod, still bounced up joyfully to proclaim, "Synods ought to be fun and this one really was. Most people worked seriously without taking themselves too seriously." Synods provide a public microcosm to see CRC leadership development in action. They are places where leaders are tested and informally evaluated for potential service in congregations and agency ministries. Most synods I have attended have shown humble servants at their God-pleasing best.

Yet the low-point for all synods occurs during the last hours when delegates receive reports from our denomination's Synodical Deputies. Among other duties, those pastors attend classis meetings to adjudicate between pastors and congregations in crisis. Every year the list of pastors leaving congregations under difficult circumstances grows. Some pastors leave a present ministry because of intolerable situations with council or congregation. Most eventually find pastorates elsewhere, even in other denominations. Others are deposed from office because of scandal or abuse.

Delegates do not learn details, but personal reports often testify to intense, insoluble tensions resulting in friction and open conflict. All contribute to casualties among pastors and in congregations. Too frequently, former colleagues have found inappropriate escape in moral failures or addictions. When the reports of the deputies end, year after year the same sad hand-wringing speeches and prayers lament the personal and communal agony behind these lists and names, begging members and God for solutions.

Thus we see the acute need for pastoral leadership development and maintenance in these annual back door exits to which those statistics testify. Sadly, our denomination is not alone. In a paper presented in 2001 at a forum to strengthen congregational leadership, Dr. Craig Dykstra of the Lilly Endowment, cited studies among North American denominations: "Thirty percent of the pastors . . . Are engaged in their ministries in joyous, fruitful, happy ways.... A larger group, about 40 percent, are considerably more perplexed and at least somewhat unhappy.... Finally, about 30 percent are in despair about their work, their situations, their lives, their ministries. And the bottom third of these are actively on their way out." ("The Significance of Pastoral Ministry and the Idea of the Pastoral Imagination," p. 8).

Year by year a closely related need grows within our denomination at the front door as well. Calvin Theological Seminary is teaching more students than ever for more varied and broader ministry capacities. Yet those graduating to enter pastoral ministry have shrunk for a number of years, thus increasing annually the number of churches without pastors. Currently, around 130 of 1025 Christian Reformed congregations have no pastors. In Classis Niagara where I serve, five of thirteen congregations are without a pastor.

Such situations stretch congregational needs and add more stress to pastors serving as counselors and occasional preachers to pastor-less churches. Unless more persons answer God's call to parish ministry, some estimate that by 2020, one-quarter of Christian Reformed churches could be without pastors. (For related reflections, see Bruce Ballast, "Where Have All the Pastors Gone?" *The Banner*, December, 2004, pp. 44-47.)

Attempting a diagnosis

Why are so many pastors leaving the parish, disillusioned with the ministry or abandoning what they believed was a life calling? Why are fewer candidates entering pastoral ministry? Why are too many congregations losing their pastors, some serially, to less casualty-prone ministries such as teaching or institutional chaplaincy?

One general answer, applicable to all three questions, is that if pastors expect to lead, they often face congregations and councils that supposedly ask them to lead, but do not know how to support lead-

Continued on page 17...

...continued from page 16

ership or to model "followership." Conflict and separation often follow. No matter how strong God's call is personally to a given pastor, unless congregational lay leaders understand that leading requires a leader to encourage a ministry plan that the congregation is committed to implementing, wreckage will continue to mount in separated and deposed pastors and frustrated congregations with shrinking membership. Somehow, lay leaders, congregations and pastors have to work harder at this part of the "Charge to Elders" in the CRC's form for "Ordination of Elders and Deacons": "Be wise counselors who support and strengthen the pastor."

Looking for communally workable remedies

While not pleasant, those scenarios are realistic and necessary to consider in order to engage the issue. Happily, within the CRCNA several existing programs and processes give opportunities for pastoral and lay leadership development. To open the front door further, for seven years Calvin Seminary has offered "Facing Your Future" for high school students who are willing seriously to consider ministry. In order to help close the back door, "Sustaining Pastoral Excellence" offers grants to pastors to organize peer learning groups.

I am pleased to belong to one such regional group that will begin meeting in January, 2005 to read, study and pray to maintain and further develop communal and personal spiritual disciplines and intellectual habits.

Finally, over the last year and a half an officially sponsored Leadership Development Team of the CRCNA has met often and produced a significant and far-reaching paper called, "Leadership: A Working Definition." In future articles I propose to explore four distinct categories found in that paper and informed by a rich conversation among those lay and ordained leaders from the CRCNA and some denominational agencies who wrote it.

James C. Dekker is pastor of Covenant Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines, Ontario.

BuildingTrust
Vicky Van Andel Ed.

A Portrait of a Woman

Earlier this year I started a small project. I decided to cut out all the pictures I came across in the newspaper portraying women wearing scarves and long dresses. I wanted to do that because I enjoy photography and I noticed how photogenic these women were. I studied what it is that makes these pictures so beautiful.

I discovered that it has to do with the way the colored scarves frame their faces. The scarves are like a frame around the face of a woman. They accentuate her eyes and facial features, causing them to stand out more clearly. One is drawn in to take a closer look at the fine features of these women's faces and their shiny expressive eyes.

This is an interesting observation. However, the collection of pictures has had a much greater impact on me than just learning why I like them. It has provided me with an overview of the many events that have taken place this past year in the lives of women around the world.

The pictures I collected represent many countries. The bulk of the photographs reflect experiences of the women of Sudan. Sudanese women were in the news more than any other women in the world. The next largest group shows the lives of women in Afghanistan. These women also caught many headlines. All the other pictures describe the experiences of women during times of upheaval in countries such as Iraq, Russia, Nigeria, Kenya, Israel and Botswana.

As I organize the pictures, I see that each photograph has a tragic story connected to it. Just one of the pictures could be considered somewhat happy. It shows a laughing woman from Botswana holding her child. Both are HIV positive but have had the privilege of receiving medical help and now are considered cured. Is this really a happy story? All the other pictures describe the lives of suffering women.

The stories of the Sudanese women are the most horrifying. In one photograph a woman stands next to a pile of dry thorns. She tries to brace herself against a desert sandstorm. Her long bright purple dress blows in the wind creating a fascinating contrast to the dull background of the dry land. She leans on a stick because she has only one leg. She is one of millions of refugees trying to find safety in camps.

Another woman sits by her make-shift tent in her yellow polka-dot dress. She looks sad. Thousands of people in Sudan have died from hunger. Another displaced Sudanese woman stands in the desert surrounded by a pile of dry, dead branches. She carries a small child. Her multi-colored dress contrasts stunningly with her bleak environment. She has been beaten and raped by Arab militia and chased from her home. This happened when she was out looking for firewood to cook a meal for her family.

The next largest group of pictures portrays women in Afghanistan, many of them hidden in green and blue burkas. A few women's head coverings are drawn back because they are carrying a child. Their faces are beautiful but their eyes reflect fear and helplessness. These women are waiting to be registered so they can vote in their country's first free election. They are frightened and anxious because they are resisting the will of their husbands, and could be killed for this. These women are uneducated and have been confined to their homes for years. They have never had a voice. One Afghan woman has a badly scarred face. She attempted suicide by putting herself on fire, the only option she could think of to escape a life of abuse.

Iraq has the next largest number of pictures. Two draped women lean caringly over their sick children. One child suffers from malnourishment and the other is seriously ill. Medical help comes too late for them.

Then there are pictures of women in Russia. They wail and mourn the death of their children in the school hostage taking in Beslan. One woman kneels by the tombstone of her child, embracing it desperately. There are also pictures of the earthquake in Bam. Women sit in the middle of the rubble of a crushed city embracing each other, crying and wailing and mourning the deaths of family members.

I don't need to describe the rest of the photographs. Their common denominator is overwhelming grief and suffering. And so I dedicate this year-end column of Building Trust to all the suffering, grieving, abused and oppressed women in the world. As a privileged woman living in North America I promise to pray for them each day and look for opportunities to support them.

We tend to feel helpless when confronted with the terrible suffering of people elsewhere in the world. And in some ways we are helpless. We can't really change the big picture. We can't all go to Sudan or Afghanistan to help out. And even if we could, wouldn't it be only a drop in the bucket?

But what is it we can do? We can all together keep praying. We can also look for opportunities that come our way to help. We can challenge ourselves to be more sensitive to these opportunities, so that when they come we are ready to respond. Opportunities can present themselves by way of a person or an organization. We can support our church world relief projects more generously. We can try to be more other focused than self focused. We can give more and take less.

That is not to say that troubles only happen elsewhere and not amongst ourselves. Each culture has its own blessings and challenges. We don't have to feel guilty for our blessings, nor for our struggles, even though they may not hold a candle to those of oppressed women. Our struggles are real and painful. Our lives are busy and complicated. We have a hard time connecting with each other. We have many responsibilities and our society places heavy demands on us. Though our troubles are different from those experienced elsewhere in the world we don't have to minimize them to become more aware of the sufferings of others.

This column is not intended to depress or discourage us. It is meant to bring us hope and courage. This courage comes from God who provides for us in all things. That same God provides for the abused and oppressed women around the world, in the special ways they need it. God's love blankets the whole world. Though we may not see it all the time we may take comfort in it.

May Christmas be a blessing and the New Year be hopeful. I also dedicate this column to my friend Elly Dalmaijer, a woman among us who truly commits her heart and soul to helping the hurting people of the world. Elly works tirelessly on relief projects sponsored by the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.

I appreciate the awareness my collection of photographs has given me. I treasure it.

Vicky Van Andel

Vicky Van Andel is the editor of this column. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to contact her via fax at 1-780-473-0970, or e-mail at : vickyv@telus.net

Opinion

Yes ... but

Bert Hielema

Fat turkeys, thin turkeys, fuels and fools

Let me start by wishing you a blessed 2005. The word "blessed" reminds me of eating: saying "a blessing" is the standard expression before we start our meal. I wonder whether this is still happening out there. At our house we still do it, because a blessing for food is now needed more than ever, especially during the festive season we just had. Let me talk turkey for a minute. Where I live there are a lot of turkeys around. All wild. The past few weeks was the time of year we put these animals in the oven. Not the wild ones, of course, but the farm-grown beasts. In North America – and with free trade, who knows, they may come from Mexico or Minnesota – nearly 300 million turkeys are raised today on factory farms stacked up in windowless buildings forever exposed to bright lights 24 hours a day to keep them awake and eating, gaining a pound a week until they weigh the ideal 15 pounds.

I am sure that, though we live in an age obsessed with bosoms, there is no connection to the most bought brand of Broad Breasted White, so popular because of their disproportionately large breasts. Not a best seller are the small-busted ones, strolling freely outdoors. No antibiotics needed in those, because they stay healthy by moving around. The others have no room for that. But it takes them a month longer to reach slaughter weight, and the almighty market considers that uneconomical, even though a study sponsored by the US Department of Agriculture in 1999 found that free-running birds have 21 percent less fat, 30 percent less saturated fat, 50 percent more vitamin A and 400 percent more omega-3 fatty acids than factory-raised birds. They also have 34 percent less cholesterol.

So, when you say a blessing before you eat your turkey, chances are that your blessings will be greater with a freedom-loving bird.

In many ways we are what we eat, which also applies to the substances our food needs to grow and be healthy. They too are what they eat. If our vegetables come from a monoculture farm, a place where, with the help of large amounts of chemical fertilizers and pesticides nothing but one crop – red cabbage or green beans or purple onions – is allowed to grow, then they may look beautiful, may be able to weather the hazards of long-distance travel and arrive at our supermarket sporting a bright and healthy appearance, yet lack much of the good things we expect in food.

Take broccoli, which is naturally rich in vitamins A and B, and has more vitamin C than citrus fruit. But raised in monoculture, shipped from far away – the average item in our store travels 5000 km – it loses up to 80 percent of its vitamin C and 95 percent of its calcium, iron and potassium. Fruits and vegetables grown organically, however, have higher levels of antioxidants, cancer-fighting stuff. That's largely because plants grown naturally possess defense systems that produce pest- and bugs combating chemicals. These same compounds also do that good work in our own bodies. But raised on herbicides and pesticides, these disease preventing elements are mostly absent. And then taste: organically grown fruits, vegetables, potatoes, beets are a real treat – their flavors practically burst from the ground.

Want to get a better bang for your buck: go to the market and organic farmers. Think globally, buy locally. Organic soil workers promote a living relationship between crop roots, soil microbes and minerals – something not possible with chemical additives. And this applies to milk and eggs as well. Not surprisingly, pastured dairy cattle and free-roaming laying hens produce more nutritious milk, cheese and eggs. You can see this in the glowing yellow yolks which have up to three times the amount of cancer-fighting omega-3's of eggs that come from factory hens. There is something curious going on in this world. There's no such thing as cheap food, because cheap food makes for expensive medicine. In the last 20 years the average amount we spend on food has gone down from about 15 percent of disposable income to less than 10 percent. In that same period the money the need for health care has increased from about 7 percent to now close to 14 percent. So take your pick: food bargains now but cancer later? That may be putting it too starkly, but I believe it to be true, because we are what we eat. just as our plants and animals are what they eat.

The basic problem is that today food is essentially oil. We eat oil. In fertilizer, pesticides, long distance travel, oil is the common ingredient. Even the soil has become soiled with it, thanks to total mechanization. Oil causes cancer, now everywhere. So when I wish you a blessed New Year, it's up to you to make your own blessing. You can do this by either shopping at farmers' markets or grow your own. Your food will be tastier, fresher and more nutritious.

By the way, your New Year will be even better with chocolate. Research published in the FASEB Journal outlined that theobromine, a derivative found in cocoa, is nearly a third more effective in stopping persistent coughs when compared with codeine, currently considered the best cough medicine. The darker the better. Chocolate also has a lot of cancer fighting antioxidants. One more thing: *Harper's* reports that Italian researchers found that women who eat large amounts of chocolate have good sex lives.

We live in a age where often wisdom is lacking. Not only evident in what we eat, but also in how we use the foodstuff we grow.

Early December I had a meeting in Toronto. I took the train and chuckled at the cars stacked up on the 401, struggling to creep ahead in the rain and mist, while I sped past, reading my morning paper.

My meeting was over well before my return train was due. So I decided to stay underground and, on a whim, wandered into the Royal York, where I noticed an interesting convention in progress: The Canadian Ethanol Conference.

Looking like a regular, fully suited, conventioneer, I went to the displays and picked up enough one-side-only printed descriptions of the many uses for Fuel Ethanol to feed my printer for the next few months. Had I a more gullible mind, I would then and there have concluded that Ethanol Production was 'The Answer,' the 'Miracle Mix,' that, "By joining the New Industrial Revolution," through "Unlocking the Magic of Nature" and using "The Fuel of the Future" we all would have "Better Lives on a Greener Earth," because "It's now possible to produce fuel ethanol not only from corn, wheat and rice, but also from organic waste such as rice straw, wood chips and corn stalks."

So have we discovered that key to Paradise? Have we finally found a modern equivalent of Alchemy, that fabled age-old attempt to find the ultimate solution to all our ills? It looks that way, as many governments have climbed on the Ethanol bandwagon. Ontario has set a target of 5% for the amount of transport fuel that will come from crops starting in two years. The European Union wants 2 percent of the oil we use to be biodiesel by the end of next year, rising to 6 percent by 2010 and 20 percent by 2020. To try to meet these targets, the EU is paying farmers an extra 45 Euro ($100 Can.) a hectare to grow them.

It's a win-win situation. Right? The farmers and the chemicals industry can develop new markets, the government can meet its commitments to cut carbon emissions, and environmentalists can celebrate the fact that plant fuels reduce local pollution as well as global warming.

The beauty is that biofuels can be deployed right now. I use in my diesel car canola oil collected from fast food outlets. That's how Rudolf Diesel envisioned his engine at the World Exhibition in 1900, running it on peanut oil. So can the entire world do this?

No. Used on a small scale, it's perfect. Perhaps a few thousand cars or trucks can run on used chip fat, replacing some 50,000 tons of diesel a year in Canada and maybe ten times that much in the USA, a small fraction of the transport fuel needed. So what if farmers in Europe, Canada and the USA were to grow crops specifically for fuel? It's happening already. Last month I traveled from Minnesota into Iowa, and saw several Ethanol plants and huge mounds of corn to be processed into fuel.

For one thing, corn burned in cars cannot feed the hungry. Today half the children of the world live in poverty and billions have not enough to eat. Were we to convert a lot of corn, wheat, rice into fuel, the impact on global food supply would be catastrophic, big enough to tip the global balance from a precarious surplus to definite deficit. If the 20% ethanol rule were to be the norm for the world, most of the world's land would be used to produce food for cars, not people. And this might well happen because markets respond to money, not to need. We, in a price-war between our desire for clean fuel and poor people's need for food, would outbid those starving creatures any time. It's already happening, of course. Though billions are under-nourished, we prefer to feed animals, because we, the meat-eaters and the dairy-product consumers simply have more purchasing power than those who live from hand to mouth. Green fuel is not only a humanitarian disaster; it's an environmental peril as well. Markets go to the cheapest supplier and the highest return. Palm oil, probably the most suitable of sources, comes from the tropics, where labor is cheap. A new use for it would stimulate an even faster pace of rainforest destruction in South America, and greater land degradation in Africa, by turning these continents into our biofuel production zones. All this is nothing compared to the devastating verdict of an expert. Dr. Tad W. Patzek of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of California in Berkeley wrote a 22 page paper, entitled: "Ethanol from Corn: Clean Renewable Fuel for the Future, or Drain on Our Resources and Pockets?" of which the abstract says:" It is shown here that one burns 1 gallon of gasoline equivalent in fossil fuels to produce 1 gallon of gasoline equivalent as ethanol from corn. *Then* corn ethanol is burned as a gasoline additive or fuel. Burning the same amount of fuel *twice* to drive a car *once* is equivalent to halving the fuel efficiency of those cars that burn corn ethanol, and will cause manifold damage to air, surface water, soil and aquifers. The overall energy balance of corn conversion to ethanol demonstrates that 65% of the input energy is lost during the conversion. Finally, carbon dioxide sequestration by corn is nullified when corn ethanol is burned. Therefore, we conclude, subsidizing ethanol from corn as a gasoline oxygenate is one of the most misguided public policy decisions made in recent history."

There you have it. My question to the people in political power: Why this utter foolishness?

Bert Hielema lives in Tweed, Ont. His website has been updated, now including all past columns as well as other writings: www.geocities.com/hielemab

Indonesia churches given tight security this Christmas

Sarah Page

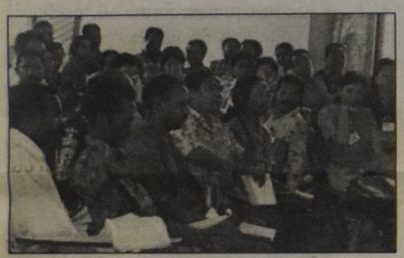
DUBLIN (Compass) – A few days before Christmas police in Indonesia pledged to provide tighter security for churches during Christmas and New Year celebrations, after one of their own was arrested in connection with the murder of a Christian village chief on the island of Sulawesi.

Central Sulawesi police chief Aryanto Sutadi confirmed yesterday that another officer Efendi had admitted to playing a role in violent attacks against Christians.

Efendi is accused of involvement in the November murder of Carminalis Ndele, the 48-year-old Christian chief of Pinedapa village, Poso district.

"Efendi has engaged in several cases of violence in Poso, including the murder of Carminalis Ndele," Sutadi told reporters from *The Jakarta Post*.

Ndele was picked up by men who were apparently familiar to him on November 1, as he returned from a day's work at his plantation. Nothing more was seen or heard of Ndele until his head was found in a black plastic bag, dropped outside a gas station in Poso on November 4.



Church leaders in West Papua, Indonesia take part in a conflict communication training session.

The pastor's body was later found near Masani village on the Poso coast, church sources reported.

The Indonesian government had allocated 1.192 billion rupiah ($127,800) to 400 refugee families in Poso. Efendi and a colleague Makassau were among those responsible for distributing the funds.

By August, only 500 million rupiah ($53,615) had been disbursed.

According to witnesses, Ndele refused to accept money from Makassau and Efendi after he realized some of the funds were missing. His refusal forced the embezzlers to cover up the theft of the funds. Efendi has since admitted to "picking up the victim (Ndele) to be murdered," according to Sutadi. Makassau admitted to arranging the killing.

Under interrogation, Makassau also said Efendi had loaned him a gun for use in a previous attack on Bethany Church in Poso in November.

Efendi's arrest may be the first step in halting a series of violent attacks carried out against Christian churches and individuals in Central Sulawesi over the past year.

Following Efendi's arrest, Indonesian police pledged tighter security for churches over the Christmas season. Bomb squads were scheduled to comb churches for explosive materials before Christmas services were held. A police spokesman told *The Jakarta Post* that some churches would also be equipped with metal detectors,.

Pastors in South Sulawesi in particular were tightly guarded by police officers. South Sulawesi province is home to 683 churches.

Police officers in Bandung, West Java, said they would increase security at 36 churches in the city, providing metal detectors to some of the larger churches. Following the recent discovery of crude homemade bombs on a bus, Bandung police provided tighter security measures for churches, shopping malls and other public meeting places over the Christmas season.

In Medan, some 2,600 police were deployed at 529 churches in the city during Christmas services.

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Birth

With joy and thanksgiving to our Lord
Randy & Lisa **Geerlinks** (nee Scholten)
announce the safe arrival
of a 3rd daughter:

Becca Rae

weighing 7 lbs 14 oz on Dec. 16, 2004
in Palmerston. She is welcomed by her
big sisters Alexandria and Carissa.
She is the 7th grandchild for
Jack & Theresa Scholten
and 17th for Bert & Grace Geerlinks.
She is another great-grandchild
for Alice Van Gyssel and Jane Drost.
Home address: PO Box 194
Drayton ON N0G 1P0

Anniversaries

1955 Hoogeveen, Drenthe February 2 Moorefield, ON 2005

There are many who say, "Oh that we might see some good!
Lift up the light of thy countenance upon us, O Lord!" Psalm 4:6

We give praise and thanks to God,
Together with our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents

SIMON AND LAMMY BENJAMINS (nee **Kelly**)

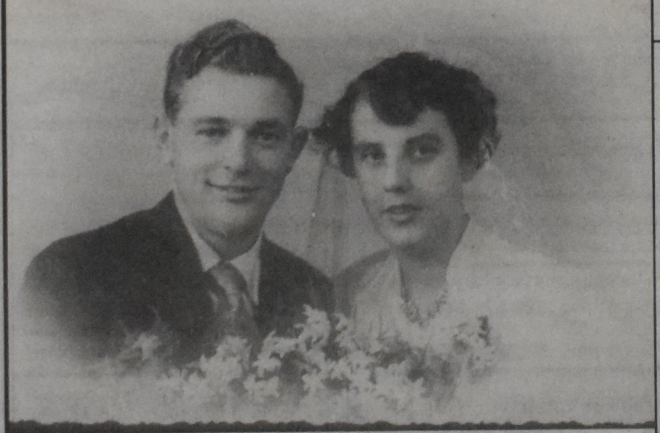
on the occasion of their **50th Wedding Anniversary** on February 2, 2005

Ed & Gina Benjamins, *Moorefield, ON*
Jennifer & Everett Huberts – Tiffany, Travis & Jessa
Pamela Benjamins
John & Audrey Benjamins, *Hamilton, ON*
Stewart Klazinga, Kendra, Sharon & Luke
David Benjamins, *Moorefield, ON*
Cathy Benjamins, *Ridgeville, ON*
Margaret & Bert Hessels, *Alma, ON*
Melissa, Brad, Nicole & Sean

Would be very pleased if you would join us
in this joyful celebration on Saturday, January 29, 2005, D.V.
Open House from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. at "Moorefield Community Centre."
Your presence will be a gift to us.

Home address: RR 3 Moorefield ON NOG 2K0

1955 Westerbork, the Netherlands January 21 Wellandport, Ontario 2005



With joy and thanksgiving to God, we wish to announce
the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents and grandparents.
Psalms 32:8b "I will guide thee with mine eye."

BERT AND FRANCES SNIPPE

We pray the God will continue to bless them
as he has so richly done throughout their marriage
Congratulations!

With much love and joy from your children and grandchildren.
Lydia & Peter Bruining – Rachel, Joshua, Reanne, Katelyn
Jack & Debbie Snippe – Robert, Johnathon , Kimberly, Mark, Nathan
Judy & Terry Bergsma – Jessica, Julia, Levi
Leonard & Bertha-Lyn Snippe – Elisha, Bradley, Justin, Mitchell
Anthony & Janet Snippe – Matthew, Rebecca, Sarah, Ryan, Moriah
Fran & Fred Vanderheide – Robert, Victoria, Jordan, Andrea

Family and friends are invited to celebrate with us during an **OPEN HOUSE**
at Riverside Christian Reformed Church, Wellandport, Ontario
on Saturday, January 22, 2005 from 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Home address: PO#5111, Wellandport ON L0R 2J0

Obituaries

At the Georgian Heights in Owen Sound
on Friday December 24, 2004 in her 96th year,

MARTHA VAN SCHEPEN
(nee **Zylstra**)

the beloved wife of the
late Hendrik Koop Van Schepen.
The loving mother of Christina Van Schepen, Stein (Mrs. Kees Jonker), Swany (Geert Ter Steege), Anna (Mrs. Harry Heyns), Don Van Schepen, Hugh Van Schepen & his wife Tena, Henry Van Schepen & his wife Evelyn, Bob Van Schepen & his wife Joanne, John Van Schepen & his wife Willy.
The loving grandmother of 22 grandchildren and 32 great-grandchildren.
Predeceased by her brothers & sisters.

A funeral service was held at the Christian Reformed Church on Wednesday at 11 a.m. with Interment in Greenwood Cemetery. As an expression of sympathy, memorial donations to the Timothy Christian School would be appreciated by the family.

Correspondence:
c/o Brekenridge-Ashocroft Funeral Home
241 - Ninth St W, Owen Sound ON N4K 3N7

Souburg St. Catharines
The Netherlands Canada
1922 2004

The Lord suddenly took to himself our dear brother, brother-in-law and uncle.

MARINUS KOOLE

Paul(†) & Prina Koole, *St Catharines*
Anton(†) & Maria Koole, *Driebergen*
Leen & San Koole, *Middelburge*
Co & Maap Sinke, *Woodstock*
David(†) & Jannie Koole, *Hattem*
Bouwdewijn & Koos Koole, *Oost-Souberg*
Gideon & Krina Koole, *Middelburg*
Leny & Piet Marinussen, *Kloetinge*
Wim Koole, *sHertogenbos*
Riet Renkema, *Vineland*
and nieces and nephews.

January 5, 1922 December 11, 2004
Souburg, The Netherlands St. Catharines, ON

And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
And to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8

MARINUS KOOLE

was unexpectedly called to be with his Lord in his 83rd year

Loving husband of Elizabeth
Precious Dad and Grandpa of:
Maria & John Bajema
Natasha, Mark & Stacy
Arie & Diane Koole
Matthew, Brandon & Allison, Charles
Linda & Jan van Barneveld
Jeremy (Dylan), Justin & Heather, Jennifer & Aaron (Allison), Dan & Natasha, Renee, Jason, Johanna, Sarah
Frances & Leo Versluis
Alex
Ron & Ginny Koole
Jason, Katie, Lucas
Nancy & Tom Postma
Jackie, Jason, Kim
Heather & John Hoekstra
Samuel Marinus (born Dec 18, 2004)
Philip Marinus Koole
Pre-deceased by his first wife Elizabeth (1971) and daughter Wilma (1970)

Marinus is now with God which gives us much comfort.
We love him so much and miss his daily presence.
A celebration of his life was held on Dec, 14, 2004
at Jubilee Fellowship Chr. Ref. Church.
In honor of his life, donations may be made to Beacon Christian Schools, 2 O'Malley Dr, St. Catharines ON L2N 6N7
Tributes and Memories: www.mem.com

Correspondence: Mrs. Elizabeth Koole
29 Arbour Glen Dr, St. Catharines ON L2W 1B3

You are of Christ, and Christ is of God.
1 Corinthians 3:23

God the Father of all mercy,
in His infinite wisdom and eternal grace,
took to Himself His dear child

MARIANNA CLEMENTINE
VAN HARTINGSVELDT-VAN VELDEN

February 18, 1923 - December 19, 2004

Beloved wife of:
Willem Karel Van Hartingsveldt
Loving mother and grandmother of:
Job & Jacqueline
Michael & Katherine
Adrienne, Jakob
Robert & Jennifer
Rebecca & Mark
Joel
Bill & Mary
Justin & Susanne
Brooke & Jonathan
Maria
Michael & Rita
Jordan
Elliott
Pete & Karon
Daniel
Kevin
Michelle
Stefan
Dylan

The funeral took place on
December 22, 2004 at 11 a.m. at
Trinity O.R.C. St. Catharines, Ontario

Home Address: Shalom Manor
12 Bartlett Ave, Grimsby ON L3M 4N5

LAMMERT SLOFSTRA

passed away at Freeport Hospital in Kitchener, Ont. on July 30, 2004 at the age of 75.

Loving father of Henry, Peter, Martin and William and faithful husband of Denise (Dieuwke) Slofstra-Lollinga. Dad will be lovingly remembered also by his daughters-in-law: Nancy, Gayle, Sandra, and Jennifer; and by his grand-children: William, Anna, Emily, Samantha, Michael, Kathleen, David, Joel and Selena Slofstra.

Dad stayed in the home of Henry & Nancy Slofstra in Linwood and at Chateau Gardens in Elmira while he struggled through the advanced stages of emphysema. Funeral services took place at the Second Christian Reformed Church in Brampton on August 4.

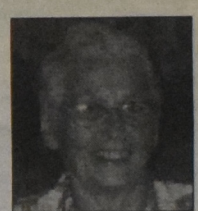
Dad began his life's journey in Holland on October 31, 1928. In 1959 he sailed across the ocean to join his family in Medicine Hat, Alberta, where he is survived by a loving and extended family of brothers, sisters, nieces & nephews.

He moved with his immediate family to Brampton in 1967. Now he has crossed another bar, his final one.

"For, though from out our bourne of
time and place,
The flood may bear me far
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar."
(Tennyson)

Correspondence: Denise Slofstra
64 Woodward Ave
Brampton ON L6V 1K6

Nijmegen (Nld) Surrey, B.C.
May 29, 1926 December 22, 2004



Her mind crumbling due to vascular dementia,
her weak body finally succumbing to an infection,
ordered by physician to move her to a care home
when she would leave the hospital,
Our Faithful God and Father to take her to the best home
available, His own.
My most precious partner and humbling, honest critic
of more than 55 years
and our truly loving, level-headed mother
and grandmother

HARRIET VANDENPOL nee **Van Beek**

Missed and mourned by: Al.J.VandenPol, her husband
Children and grandchildren:
Jack & Anna VandenPol, *Lacombe AB*
Robert, Christine, Michael and Ronald;
Janice & Hank Deruiter, *Surrey BC*
Jason, David & Linda
Harriet & Dick Knor, *Baltimore ON*
Toby, Luke & Kim, Leah & Kent with Aydan
Gerald with Jake, *Orillia ON*
Claire & Mike Zsohar, *Brantford ON*
Derek and Nicolas
Dwayne & Sonya VandenPol, *Surrey BC*
Amanda, Mark and Benjamin
Peter, *Port Hope ON*
Jacob, Steven and Samantha

Besides her family the focus of her life was caring service to all hurting, helpless, homeless and lonely people who came on our way.
That's why we based our Memorial Service for her on December 22 in Fleetwood CRC on Matt. 25:31-40; 25:21.

Correspondence: Al.J.VandenPol, #301 - 9030 -158 St,
Surrey BC V4N 5G4

Job Opportunities/Classifieds

JUBILEE FELLOWSHIP CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
in St. Catharines, Ontario, is seeking to fill a position for
Director of Ministries.
This director, either male or female, will develop and coordinate activities in accordance with Jubilee's Concept of Ministry, particularly in the areas of Youth and Outreach.
For more information or to apply in confidence, please contact:
Jubilee Fellowship CRC, Attention: Bert Witvoet
13 Wilholme Dr RR3
St. Catharines ON L2R 6P9
(Applications must be received by February 15, 2005)

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CAMPUS MINISTRY
in **Halifax** is seeking applications for the position of
Chaplain at Dalhousie University.
The ideal candidate will have a graduate degree and experience in engaging contemporary culture from a Reformed theological perspective.
For more information, job description and profile please contact:
Pastor Paul Vanderkooy
29 Hardwoodlands Road
Milford Nova Scotia B0N 1Y0 pvkooy@ns.sympatico.ca

HOPE CRC BRANTFORD
invites applications for a part-time position for
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If you are an ordained minister and would be interested in providing pastoral care to seniors, homebound members, and singles, approx. 10 hrs/wk. please send your resume to:
Hope CRC, 64 Buchanan Cres,
Brantford ON N3P 2A5
attention: Audrey Reitsma by January 15, 2005
or email **hopecrc@sympatico.com**

DORDT COLLEGE

Dean of Chapel: Dordt College invites applications for the position of Dean of Chapel. Located in the heart of vibrant Mid-America, Dordt College enrolls approximately 1,250 students, and has been ranked by the *U.S. News and World Report* as one of the "top ten best values among regional liberal-arts colleges in the Mid-West". Dordt College seeks to provide a holistic learning experience for our students, in which they can develop Christian insight to discern and challenge the worldviews of our age in light of God's Word and a reformational perspective.

Reporting to the Vice President of Student Services, the dean in this position would primarily be responsible for nurturing the spiritual life of the college community through preaching, teaching, discipleship training, worship leadership, and pastoral care. Other duties would include directing all chapel planning and speaking ordinarily once a week, teaching one course per semester, meeting with and counseling students in regards to pastoral needs, arranging service, faith development and discipleship opportunities.

Candidates should have Masters degree in Divinity, and a ThM and/or PhD. Three years of related experience and campus ministry training is also highly desired, as well as someone who is either ordained or ordainable in a confessional Reformed denomination. Demonstrated teaching ability, as well as a good understanding of and commitment to the Reformed perspective is desired.

Review of applications received will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. Enthusiastic Christians with a commitment to the Reformed faith and a desire to promote quality Christian higher education, are invited to send a detailed letter of application, current resume, at least three professional references, and copies of your college transcripts to:

Susan Droog, Director of Human Resources, Dordt College
498 Fourth Ave. NE, Sioux Center IA 51250
Phone: (712) 722-6017; Fax: (712) 722-1198; Email: sdroog@dordt.edu

Dordt College does not discriminate as to age, sex, national origin, marital status or against those who are disabled

TIMOTHY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

is seeking applications for an **administrator** to begin August 1, 2005. The position is a 50% administrator / 50% teacher in junior or intermediate grades. Timothy Christian School is an interdenominational school with a Reformed perspective on Christian education. We are a dynamic school serving 110 students from Sr. kindergarten to grade 8, where the love for Christ is reflected in the care and compassion for it's students. The education and programs are of high calibre with a dedicated staff.
Qualified individuals should send their resumes along with their philosophy of Christian education to:
Principal Search Committee
c/o Mr. Richard Ubbens
14 Ladywood Drive
Etobicoke ON M9V 1K9
416-991-7538 Email: rubbens@toronto.ca
Application Deadline January 21, 2005

School Information
Timothy Christian School
Website: www.timothycs.com
28 Elmhurst Drive, Toronto, Ontario M9W 2J5
Telephone: 416-741-5770 Fax: 416-741-3359

STRATHROY COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

SCCS is seeking applications for an administrator to begin in July 2005. Strathroy Community Christian School is an interdenominational school based on the reformed tradition, operated by the Strathroy Community Christian School Society. SCCS is a member of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools. SCCS serves 100 families with an enrollment of 200 students from "Joy School-preschool" to Grade 8. The school is located in Southwestern Ontario, 30 minutes west of London Ontario. Visit (sccs.ca) for more information concerning Strathroy Community Christian School.
Applications will be accepted until *January 30, 2005.*
Qualified applicants who have or are working towards their Christian Principal Certificate should forward their resumes along with their Statement of Faith and Philosophy of Christian Education to
Ed Visser
22338 Adelaide Rd.
Mt. Brydges ON N0L 1W0
email: visser@golden.net phone: 519 264-1936

BULKLEY VALLEY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

a school of 400 students located in the scenic Bulkley Valley of B.C., invites applications for a **principal** at its elementary campus, effective August 1, 2005 (position involves some teaching time).

This campus has approximately 175 students from K-6.

Bulkey Valley Christian is a school rooted in the reformed tradition, but contains a diverse denominational mix.

Applications and inquiries for this position can be forwarded to:

Attn: Irene Bakker, Board of Directors Chair
Bulkley Valley Christian School Phone: **250-847-9833**
PO Box 2117 Fax: 250-847-0184
Smithers BC V0J 2N0 Email: **bvcselem@telus.ne**

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905-648-2131 ext. 4205 (Ben) stewardship@redeemer.on.ca

GREENHOUSE VEGETABLE OPERATION
in Central Ontario is seeking an individual with greenhouse experience and leadership skills. The responsibilities would include supervision of up to 20 people and keeping production records. Argus control or other computer experience would be an asset.

Please fax resume to:
905-775-0011.
Email to:
foothill@neptune.on.ca

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St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7

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- advertising rates
- writer guidelines

etc.
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Fax: 519-485-2103
email: jukema@lilbitcountry.ca
web: www.lilbitcountry.ca

Classifieds

Real Estate

4297 Lakeshore Rd., RR#5 Forest
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Bill Jongejan, Prudential Heartland Realty @ **1-888-482-3400** or **519-524-9859**.
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Fax: 416-465-6367
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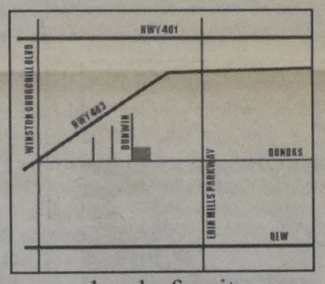

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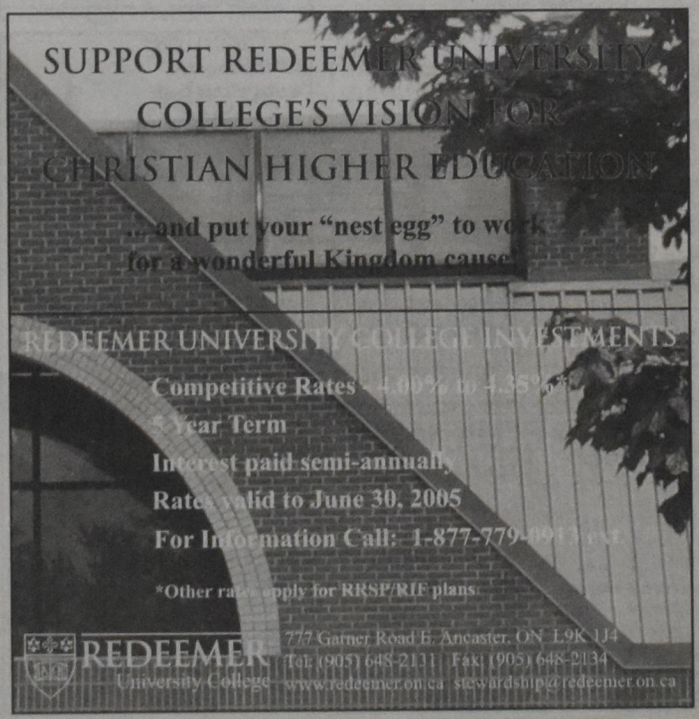
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In the long run, the answer to all those who object to the doctrine of hell is ... a question: "What are you asking God to do?" To wipe out their past sins and, at all costs, to give them a fresh start, smoothing every difficulty and offering every miraculous help? But He has done so, on Calvary. To forgive them? They will not be forgiven. To leave them alone? Alas, I am afraid that that is what he does....

C. S. Lewis,
The Problem of Pain

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Fax: 905 - 858 - 1704
e-mail: **jklomps@istar.ca**

Reg. # 2431171

Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is $7.50 per line, or $1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion

Jan 30 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. H. DeBolster will be preaching.

Apr 9 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Bethel** CRC, 716 Classic Drive, **London** (Freewill offering) Info: (519) 637-4357

May 1 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Knox** Presbyterian Church, 55 Hincks Street, **St. Thomas** (Freewill offering) Info: (519) 637-4357

May 7 **Liberation Choir 60th Anniversary Concert**, with the Guelph Symphony Orchestra, 7:30 at **Hamilton** Place. Tickets: $20, $30, $40. Available from choir members/ box office/ www.organs.ca

July 1-3 **Nobleford CRC** 100 year anniversary celebrations with picnic, banquet and services. For more information contact Bert/Pat Konynenbelt at (403)824-3442 or by e-mail at bpkbelt@telus.net *(see ad this issue)*

MARANATHA HOMES

is an award-winning ***Senior Citizen Home*** located close to Burlington Christian Reformed Church and Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church. Audio hook-up for the Sunday services is available in every apartment and there is a weekly evening video church service presentation.

Local bus service at the door. **Information available from:**

Rosanne van der Woerd
3260 New St. Unit 109
Burlington ON L7N 3L4
905-639-9054

For pictures and more information, go to our website at:
http://home.worldchat.com/~hordyk/MaranathaHomes.html

THE LIVING WORD

Sermons for reading services

This is the last year of the printed sermons.
For a supply of specially priced back copies contact:
R. Vander Ploeg,Secr./Treas
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Phone: (519)-539-2117
Email:
rvanderploeg@execulink.com

Sermons also available online at:
www.crcna.org/whatweoffer/resources/sermons/

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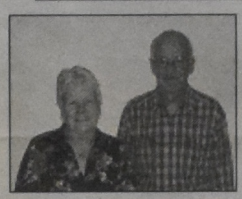

" Having been part of the Christian community for many years, we look forward to spending our retirement years in a similar setting at Wellingstone."
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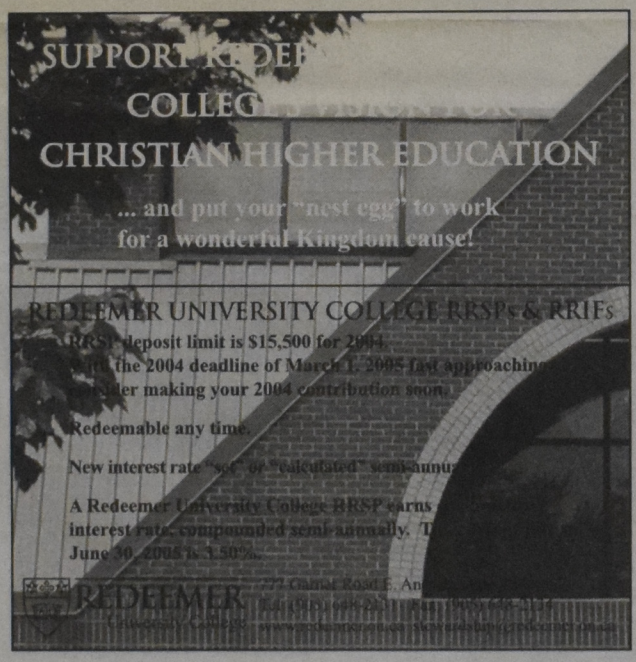
1415 Upper Wellington Street, Hamilton, Ontario
email: office@wellingstone.ca www.wellingstone.ca

"Lord, You have been our dwelling place throughout all generations" – Psalm 90:1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On **July 1-3, 2005,**
the **NOBLEFORD CRC**
invites all former members and interested persons to join us in celebrating 100 years of God's faithfulness. A combined picnic with the Granum CRC is scheduled for July 1 at Park Lake with many planned activities. On Saturday, there will be a historical tour of the area followed by an open house at the original church now located in Picture Butte. A banquet will be held at the Nobleford Community Complex on Saturday at 6:30 p.m. On Sunday, the morning worship service will be held at the Community Complex at 10.00 a.m. with lunch to follow. A second service is planned for 1:30 p.m. at the Nobleford CRC. Registration costs for the banquet will be $25.00 per person on or before April 30, 2005 and is limited to persons ages 13 and over. After April 30 the cost will be $30.00 per person.

Please forward your **registrations** to
Jackie Postman at Box 212, Nobleford AB T0L 1S0
and include the name(s) of those planning to attend the banquet. Make your cheque/money order payable to CRC of Nobleford Anniversary Fund.

For more information contact Bert/Pat Konynenbelt at (403)824-3442 or by e-mail at bpkbelt@telus.net

DUTCH SERVICE

January 30, 2005 at 3:00 p.m
Ancaster Christian Reformed Church
Rev. H. DeBolster will be preaching.

Welkom

valentine

a division of Merit Vacations

Martinair **Tulip sale**
Adults $599 seniors/children $549
depart April 11, 18 or 19
return April 27
airport taxes $95

Mississauga 905-890-5333 or 1-800-268-6144
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TICO Registration #4499356

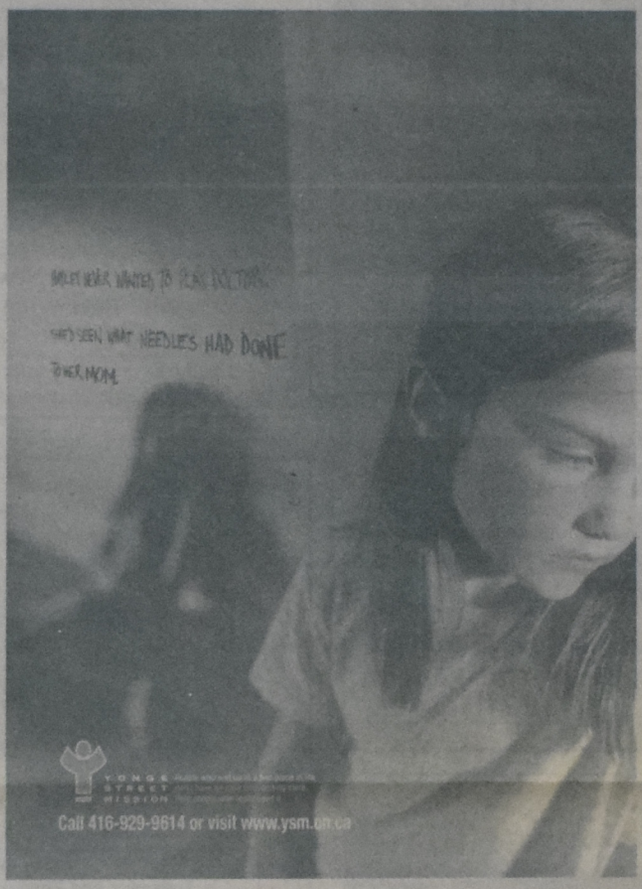
A mission to heal the abused children

Sonya Vanderveen-Feddema

Many of the 75 programs offered at Yonge Street Mission (YSM) in Toronto purposely counteract abuse and neglect, according to Barbara Walkden, Director of Development at the Mission for the past six years.

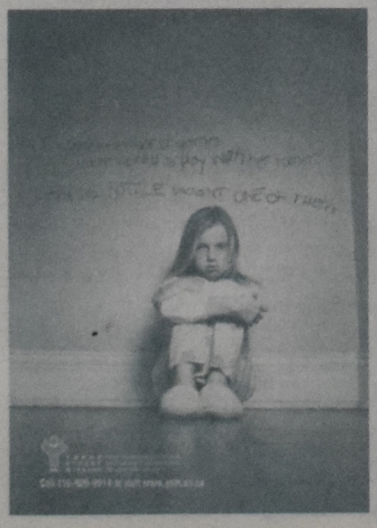
On Dec. 13, 2004 YSM – comprised of four sites, including the Evergreen Centre for Street Youth and the Christian Community Centre (CCC) – launched a special yearlong campaign against child abuse.

Since YSM's beginning in 1896, the staff has dealt daily with many people seeking help – children, youth, and adults – who have been the victims of child maltreatment in some form.



"For years the Mission's front line staff have been horrified by the sheer number of cases we see of child abuse and neglect," Walkden says. "We wanted a campaign that tells the story of how many people end up living on the street or in some 'bad place' in life. We know that child maltreatment – different forms of abuse and neglect – is not a short-term crisis in a child's life, that the effects will follow him or her through life and can affect all aspects of a person's life."

Bill Ryan, former director of the CCC and present director of staff care, says, "In the 20 years I have been with the Mission, I have heard many devastating stories of abuse, often told through tears. And victims often, amazingly, still want abusive parents in their lives. There was a woman who was repeatedly raped by her father while growing up, and yet she recently invited him to her wedding. The recurring theme is that often the abusers are the people children should be able to trust. Abuse and neglect damages them all."



"One of the impacts of abuse and neglect is anger," says Karen Bach, director of Evergreen Centre for Street Youth. "Many victims become violent, feeling that if they don't respond with violence they will remain victims. Abuse destroys self-esteem, limits potential, arrests development, and impedes the ability to thrive as full human beings."

Through the campaign, YSM hopes to heighten public awareness of the services it provides – individual counseling, referrals, and 75 programs, including meals, daycare, computer training, and March break and summer camps.

According to Walkden, Brass Tacks Advertising, under the leadership of senior creative strategist John Belbeck and art director Amy Stevens, "created a hard-hitting series of images that pulls no punches on the grim realities of what it's like to be a maltreated child."

"Not everyone is going to feel comfortable with what's being talked about in the ads," says Belbeck.

Stevens hopes that the ads will help the public to understand what many people go through in their youth, and stimulate them to act generously and compassionately toward victims of abuse.

Brass Tacks Advertising, Viacom – a transit ad company – and other companies in the industry generously provided pro bono work for the campaign, which will include numerous subway station and vehicle print ads, transit shelter print ads, one radio Public Service Announcement (PSA) and two television PSAs. The broadcast PSAs have been approved by the CRTC.

According to Health Canada studies, Walkden points out, forms of child maltreatment include physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, and witnessing family violence.

"It should be noted that different forms of maltreatment generally occur in various combinations," she says. "It is noted in two Health Canada studies that abuse occurs in all socio-economic levels of society. Low-income families are more often in contact with social workers, health care professionals, and others as a result of their quest for social assistance, and they tend to come into contact with maltreatment reporting agencies more frequently than families with higher levels of resources. Some victims we assist originally come from affluent backgrounds."

Current statistics from Evergreen Health Centre indicate that 55% of women and 25% of men have experienced sexual abuse, and 65% of men have experienced physical abuse.

YSM helps to restore victims' self-esteem and gives them the tools to make positive, healthy changes in their lives. For example, at Evergreen Centre for Street Youth there is an Employment Resource Centre providing e-mail and Internet access, voice mail boxes, resume writing and job search help, various workshops such as anger management, and support after employment has been found.

"With one-on-one contact and helping people believe in themselves, we show people that they have great worth," Walkden says. "We do this by affording respect and dignity to everyone we encounter."

Help needed in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India

"What a tragedy. So many lives lost. So many people who never knew what happened to them." This was the reaction of CRWRC's International Relief coordinator, Jacob Kramer, to the horrific earthquake and tsunamis that rocked Southern Asia on December 26. This disaster caused huge waves that ended up taking the lives of more than 30,000 people in Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. An additional 40,000 people were injured, and hundreds of thousands were left homeless.

Today, survivors of the quake are living in a daze as they struggle to find food and shelter amidst the despair and destruction of one of the worst disasters ever. CRWRC is responding. Soon after the disaster struck, CRWRC began coordinating with our staff in Asia to determine how to best assist those in need.

"It is important at times like this to not only send needed supplies, but to also help the local people play a part in the response," says Jacob Kramer, CRWRC's Relief Coordinator. "They need to know that they can do something to overcome this tragedy."

Right now, CRWRC efforts will be centered on three different areas:

Indonesia. Nick Armstrong (CRWRC-Indonesia) is preparing a small response program with the churches in the Aceh area in Northern Sumatra. CRWRC has worked with this group of churches before to respond to earthquakes and land slides. This new response will focus primarily on purchasing and distributing food, water, clothing, and tarps.

India: Kohima Daring (CRWRC-Bangladesh/India) is working with EFICOR, a long-term partner of CRWRC, to prepare a response. The eastern coast of India, north of Madras, is where the most damage occurred. EFICOR has had many programs in this area including previous disaster response efforts. Through EFICOR, CRWRC hopes to purchase and distribute food, water, clothing, and other supplies to those most in need.

Sri Lanka: Jack Schenk is a long time CRWRC Relief Volunteer. He has previously helped CRWRC respond to droughts in Kenya and Malawi. Recently, he has been working for another Christian aid organization in Sri Lanka, and is thus positioned to help CRWRC coordinate a response there. This island has been particularly hard hit and has many needs. Through Jack and the Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka, CRWRC will provide immediate emergency supplies to survivors of the disaster.

In total, CRWRC has already released $30,000 (US) for this response. Please pray for these efforts and support them with your financial gifts. As more information becomes available, it will be posted on the CRWRC website at www.crwrc.org.